BAHUROOPE GANDHI

By *ANU BANDYOPADHYAYA*

Foreword by JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

To my mother who taught me to respect all work

FOREWORD

PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI

This is a book for children. But I am sure that many grown-ups will read it with pleasure and profit.

Already Gandhiji has become a legend. Those who have not seen him, especially the children of today, must think of him as a very unusual person, a superman who performed great deeds. It is desirable, therefore, for the common aspects of his life to be placed before them, as is done by this book.

It is extraordinary how in many things he took interest and when he took interest, he did so thoroughly. It was not a superficial interest. It was perhaps his thoroughness in dealing with what are considered to be the small things of life which emphasized his humanism. That was the basis of his character.

I am glad that this book has been written telling us of how Gandhiji functioned in a variety of ways, quite apart from politics and the public scene. It will perhaps give us a greater insight into him.

Jawaharlal Nehru

New Delhi,
10th March, 1964.

Introduction

THE MANUSCRIPT Of this book has been lying with me since 1949. I read D. G. Tendulkar's manuscript of the Mahatma in 1948, just after I had left the work in Kasturba training camp of Bengal. I worked in a village. The villagers around me and the girl trainees, I noticed, knew very little about Gandhiji. They observed Gandhi Jayanti, daily spun and prayed. Some had taken part in national movements and courted jail, but they did not know what Gandhiji's real contribution was. Maybe, I was wrong, but that is what I felt.

I still feel the same about many persons I come in contact with everyday, some of whom are educated, and all of whom abhor manual labour. I myself do not believe in the dignity of labour but I know the drudgery of body labour. And that is why I everyday try to share some manual labour with servants, lest I develop the feeling that just by paying a few chips I can win a right to make others work for me.

I wanted to present Gandhiji as a willing sharer in many such labours, which others do to earn their livelihood, not for the love of the work. Some incidents are repeated purposely. I definitely do not want to add more persons to the band of blind worshippers of Gandhiji. But I would very much like the young of today to know that Gandhiji was not merely the Father of the Nation or the Architect of Freedom, and then, criticise him.

The idea of the book was mine. I wrote it for the teenagers. Almost all the material has been culled from D. G. Tendulkar's Mahatma. I cannot express how much indebted I am to him for this small publication. Mr. N. G. Jog was kind enough to go through the manuscript. Mr. M. Chalapathi Rau gave me the chance of getting twenty of these sketches published in a series in the National Herald.

I am indebted to Mr. R. K. Laxman for the illustrations he has done for my book.
I am extremely grateful to Jawaharlalji for writing a foreword to this book.
I shall be happy if one young reader out of a thousand practises any of the works done by Gandhiji.

Toiler



A BUSY BARRISTER advised his clients not to ruin themselves by wasting time and money on litigation and to settle their disputes out of court through arbitration. In his leisure hours, he read books on the religions of the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsis and Buddhists. He also read books written by wise men. This study of books and a search within convinced him that each day every person should do some manual labour. It was not enough to do only brain work. The literate and the illiterate, the doctor and lawyer, barber and scavenger should be paid equal wages for their work.

He slowly changed his way of life and began to lend a hand to any work that lay before him. He decided to lead a simple community life in an ashram with his friends and family. Some of his European friends wanted to share that ashram life. They all lived like hard-working self-reliant farmers, ploughing the land and tending the orchard. No paid servants were employed. On that farm, Hindus and Muslims, Christians and Parsis, brahmins and shudras, labourers and barristers, whites and "blackies", all lived as members of one big family. In a common dining room, they ate meals prepared in a common kitchen. Their food was simple, their dress coarse. Each member got Rs.40 for his monthly expenses. The barrister lived on the same allowance, though he was then earning Rs.4,000 per month. He followed a routine of hard work with clock-like precision and took rest for six hours a day.

When a hut was being built on the farm, he was the first man to climb to the top of the structure. He was wearing coarse blue overalls with several pockets, some of which were filled with big and small nails and screws. A hammer peeped out from one of the pockets. A small saw and a borer hung on his belt. Day after day he worked in the scorching sun with his hammer and saw.

One day, after his meal, he sat to make a bookshelf. He worked for seven long hours and finished the shelf reaching right up to the ceiling. A path leading to the ashram needed metalling but he had not enough money to meet the cost. He began to collect small stones on his way back to the ashram from his regular daily walks. His companions followed his example and, in a short time, a pile of stones for paving the path rose in the yard. Thus he made others work. The ashram children also took part in gardening, cooking, sweeping, carpentry, leather-work and type-setting.

He believed that we had fallen into this unhappy state because "we looked upon masons, shoe-makers, carpenters, blacksmiths and barbers as inferior to us, we had taken away all courtesy, learning, decency and culture from their trades and homes. We treated skilled work as low and

exalted clerical work and thus invited slavery for ourselves.”

Early in the morning, the barrister ground wheat in a hand-mill, then dressed up and walked five miles to reach his office. He would clip his own hair and wash or iron his clothes. He would keep awake a whole night nursing the plague-stricken miners. He would wash the wounds of a leper and would not feel ashamed to clean latrines. He knew no laziness, fear or hatred.

He wrote articles for his journal, typed them out himself, composed them in his own printing-press and, if necessary, lent a hand in working a hand-driven printing machine. He was good at binding books. The creative hand that wrote inspiring editorials and letters, spun thread on a charkha, wove on a loom, cooked new dishes, used a needle skillfully and tended fruit trees and vegetables, was equally adept in tilling land, drawing water from a well, hewing wood and unloading heavy goods from a cart.

When in jail, he had to dig hard, dry ground with a pickaxe or sew torn pieces of blankets for nine hours a day. When he felt very tired, he prayed to God for strength. The very idea of failure to do any allotted task was intolerable to him.

In the prime of his life, he more than once walked 40 miles a day to buy things from a store in the nearest town. Once he walked 55 miles in one day. As a voluntary stretcher-bearer, he carried wounded soldiers 30 to 40 miles at a stretch. Even at 78, for weeks, he every day worked 18 hours, sometimes his working hours extended to 21. At that age, he could not do any physical labour except spinning, but was fit enough to walk barefoot three to five miles every wintry morning on a dew-soaked village path. For his amazing devotion to and capacity for work, he won the title of Karmavir from his South African colleagues.

Karmavir Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born on October 2,1869.

Barrister

GANDHI MATRICULATED at the age of 18. Soon after he went to London to study law. He was the first Modh-bania to go abroad. After joining the Inner Temple, Gandhi found that passing law examinations was easy. Heading notes on the texts only for a couple of months, many passed the examinations. That easy course of reading notes did not appeal to Gandhi. He loathed deception. He chose to read the textbooks in original and spent much money on them. He had to study hard for nine months to read the fat volumes on Common Law. He learnt Latin and read the Roman Law books in the original. The barristers then were known as "dinner barristers" because they had to keep 12 terms in about three years. Altogether they had to attend at least 72 dinners. The students had to meet the expense of these costly dinners.

Gandhi was not used to such social gatherings and could not understand how eating dinners and drinking wine helped one to become a good barrister. Anyway, he had to attend dinners. He was a vegetarian and a teetotaller. As he could not share all the dishes and did not drink, many law students were keen on having him as a partner.

These dinners and readings did not help Gandhi to overcome his shyness and nervousness. He wondered how to use the book learning while arguing a case. An English lawyer encouraged him and told him that honesty and industry were enough to become a good lawyer and to earn a modest living. Facts were three-fourths of the law; if he took care of the facts of a case, the law would take care of itself. He advised Gandhi to read books on history and general knowledge. Gandhi followed his advice.

For a short time, in England, Gandhi made an effort to become a smart English gentleman. He tried to learn proper pronunciation and speech-making, to dance, to play the violin and to dress in the right fashion. He bought an expensive suit from the most fashionable London shop and sported a double watch-chain of gold. He wore top hats and ties. He also made friends with young ladies. Slowly he was drifting to a life of ease and luxury. Some months later, he realised how foolish he was. He was putting pressure on his eldest brother for his expensive habits. He had come to England for study, not to ape the ways of an Englishman. Immediately he decided to change his style of living. He hired a low-rented room and a stove and began to cook his breakfast and dinner himself. He lunched at cheap vegetarian restaurants and stopped spending money on conveyance. He walked eight to ten miles every day.

In due time, after 32 months' stay in England, he was enrolled as a barrister. Two days later he sailed for India.
On reaching India, he rented a house in Bombay and hired a cook. He attended the High Court regularly, saw how cases were conducted and spent many hours in the Bar library. He read books on Indian Law.

His first case was a simple one. He was offered a fee of Rs.30 for it. When the young inexperienced banister of 22 stood up to argue, he lost his nerve. His head reeled and tongue got parched up. He left the court in shame. Thenceforth he did not take up any case in that court.

His expenses mounted up, his income was almost nil. He proved good at drafting memorials but that neither was a barrister's job, nor did it fetch enough money. After six months' trial, Gandhi joined his brother and his family at Rajkot. His brother had high hopes in the success of his England-returned barrister brother. He was sorely disappointed. Gandhi felt miserable.

At Rajkot another problem arose. As a rule, he had to pay a commission to the vakils who brought him cases. Gandhi declined to do so, it appeared immoral to him to give commission. His brother pleaded and Gandhi made a compromise. Gandhi was then earning about Rs.300 per month. He was not happy in doing that work, nor with the practice of falsehood all around.

Luckily he got an offer from a rich Muslim merchant of South Africa. He was to get Rs.1,575 all found and a first-class passage with return fare. He accepted the offer and sailed for the far-away continent. He had no idea about the conditions of living in South Africa. When the ship anchored at Zanzibar, he went to see how the court worked there. Many questions relating to book-keeping he could not follow. The case for which he was going to South Africa was mainly about accounts. Gandhi bought a book on accounting and read it carefully.

On the third day of his arrival at Durban, Gandhi went to the court. The magistrate ordered him to take off his turban. Gandhi refused to obey him and left the court. From the time of his landing on the South African soil, he noticed how the Indians were ill treated by the whites. He was labelled an unwelcome visitor and a "coolie barrister". He smarted under these insults.

From his client Dada Abdulla he learnt details about the litigation and made a thorough study of the case. He thought both the parties would be ruined if they continued to spend on the lawyers for long. He did not like to gain money or position at the cost of his client. He believed that his true function as a legal counsel was to unite both the parties. He insisted on meeting the other party for settling the case out of court. When Dada Abdulla hesitated, Gandhi said: "Not a soul shall know anything that is confidential between us. I would only suggest to him to come to an understanding." In spite of Gandhi's mediation, the case dragged on for One year. Gandhi had a good chance of studying how a complicated case was conducted by the best attorneys and counsels. He prepared the evidence. The case was settled to the satisfaction of both the parties, but Gandhi got disgusted with his profession that could raise points of law in support of each party and make the cost go tip.

Soon after Gandhi began to practise in Durban Court, Balasundaram, an indentured labourer in tattered clothes and with two front teeth broken, came to his office. He was beaten by his white master. Gandhi calmed him, got him treated by a white doctor and secured a medical certificate relating the seriousness of the injury. We fought for 13alasundaram, won the case and found him a better master. This incident made Gandhi very popular with the poor Indian labourers. His fame as the protector of the helpless reached India. Thenceforth, he was looked upon as the friend of the friendless.

One year's experience helped Gandhi to gain confidence. After some exchange of arguments, this coolie barrister was permitted to enroll himself in the Natal Supreme Court. The white attorneys did not give him cases. He himself added more handicaps to his practice of law. He was determined to prove that a lawyer's profession was not a liar's profession. He never told untruth or tutored a witness for winning a case. Whether his client won or lost, he accepted nothing more or less than his usual fees. He did not send any reminder to his clients for unpaid fees and did not prosecute anyone for personal grievances. He was four times assaulted in South Africa, but he declined to drag the offenders to the court or to get them punished. During his 20 years of practice as a lawyer, he helped to settle hundreds of cases out of court.

Once while conducting a case, he found the client was dishonest. Without pleading for him further he asked the magistrate to dismiss the case and himself rebuked the client for bringing a false case. Gandhi once said: “I began my legal career as a second-rate lawyer. My clients were not at all impressed with my legal talents but when they saw that I would not under any circumstances swerve from truth, they clung to me.” His clients became his friends and co-workers. He built up such a reputation for honesty that he once saved a client from jail-going. The old client smuggled goods without paying the customs duty. When his honour was at stake, he told the truth to Gandhi. Gandhi advised him to confess his crime and accept the penalty. Gandhi met the Attorney-General and the Customs Officer and reported the matter truthfully. His version of the report was not questioned and the offender was only fined. In gratitude, the client had the whole incident printed and hung that sheet in his office-room.

On another occasion, there was a wrong entry of accounts in his client’s papers. Gandhi pointed out the error to the opponent and argued ably. The judge who at first accused Gandhi of sharp practice, gave verdict in favour of Gandhi’s client. The judge told the other party: “Supposing Mr. Gandhi had not admitted of the slip, what would you have done?” Gandhi was an expert crossexaminer. He was respected by the judges and members of the bar. He had many white clients. Both in India and in South Africa, he found in 99 cases out of 100, justice was denied to the Indians against the Europeans and that made him say: “Has a single Englishman suffered the extreme penalty of the law for brutal murders in India? Look at the trial of an English officer and the farcical punishment he received for having deliberately tortured the inoffensive Negroes.”

In spite of observing rigid rules and making adverse remarks about law, Gandhi prospered in his profession. In India he practised law for a short time. In South Africa his legal practice extended to 20 years. At the beginning he rented a house in a good locality and set up an establishment befitting a rising barrister. He furnished it in European style. On Sundays and holidays, he threw parties. He kept an open house and invited his close friends and subordinates to live with him. His office was six miles from his house. For some months he rode a bicycle. Afterwards he walked to the office. As Indians were not allowed to occupy any front seat in a tram-car, he did not ride it, though he could have got special permission to do so. He slowly tried to identify himself with the poor Indian labourers and took to a simple life. At the age of 40, when he was earning on an average Rs.4,000 a month, he gave up his practice and dedicated himself to public work. He gave up all his possessions for the community, worked with his hands and lived on farms.

Years later Gandhi condemned the high fees charged by lawyers and barristers in India where the law courts are run most extravagantly. They bear no relation to the poverty of the people. A lawyer can earn fifty thousand rupees to one lakh per month. Gandhi said: “A legal practice is not a speculative business. If we were not under the spell of the lawyers and law courts, we would be leading a much happier life. The lawyer’s profession teaches immorality. Perjured witnesses are ranged on either side, they sell their souls for money.” He felt that a radical change in the legal machinery was needed to make justice pure and inexpensive. He himself took up the cases of the poor without charging fees and whenever the case was connected with any public work, he charged nothing beyond actual pocket expenses. When poor Indian settlers were being ousted from the coolie locations by the municipality, Gandhi sided with the tenants. He worked hard for each case and charged only Rs.150 per case. Out of 70 cases, one was lost. Half of that income he donated to build a charitable institution.

In order to gain human rights for his countrymen, he preached resistance against the Government. He was put under arrest and was tried both in South African and Indian courts. He was sentenced to jail many times. In South Africa, he had to stand handcuffed in the witness box of the same court where he practised for ten years. After his first conviction in India, his name was removed from the roll of barristers.

Gandhi declared non-cooperation with the courts of the British Raj and advocated revival of panchayat. At the call of this law-breaker, many eminent lawyers gave up their practice and joined the freedom movement.

In reply to an address presented by a Bar Association, Gandhi said that he had been disbarred by his own Inn and had long forgotten his law. He had been engaged more in breaking the laws than in interpreting them.

Tailor



IN SOUTH AFRICA, Gandhi was twice penalised with hard labour. For some weeks, he had to sew pieces of torn blankets and cut shirt pockets from thick cloth for nine hours a day. He finished tagging the pieces given to him before time and asked for more strips. In an Indian jail for some days, he worked on a Singer Sewing Machine. All this jail work was done by him voluntarily. Gandhi wanted to grow efficient in the use of a sewing machine. He disapproved of the use of big machines that replace the working hands and make man a slave of machines owned by the capitalists. He believed that a machine must not be allowed to displace necessary human labour. The problem in India was not how to end leisure for the millions but how to utilise their idle hours. He made~ an exception of the sewing machine because “it is one of the few useful things ever invented. Singer saw his wife labouring over the tedious process of sewing and seaming with her hands and simply out of his love for her, devised the sewing machine in order to save her labour. The machine had love at its back.”

Gandhi once wrote to a female ashramite: “Don’t you worry over the tailoring of your dress - salwar and kameez. Whatever has to be prepared can be prepared by me. We can easily borrow a Singer Sewing machine. A few hours’ work should make the necessary dress.” He had every reason to be proud of his needle work. He could cut and stitch his wife’s blouses. He spun yarn on a charkha, he wove it on a handloom and sewed his own kurta. Expert tailors and shoe-makers gave free lessons to the ashram trainees. When Gandhi was guiding the Champaran ryots in resisting the indigo planters’ tyranny, a British journalist maligned him. He said that in order to win the ryots, Gandhi temporarily and specially adopted the national dress. Gandhi wrote in reply: “Having taken the vow of swadeshi, my clothing is now entirely hand-woven and hand-sewn by me or my fellow workers.

Gandhi later gave up the use of kurta and wore a loincloth and a wrap. Even then, at times, he hemmed the borders of his handkerchief, napkin or loin-cloth. When he was kept busy in sewing, he dictated letters to his secretary. During his detention in the Aga Khan Palace, he gave khadi handkerchiefs as a birthday present to the jail superintendent. Each handkerchief bore the initials of the superintendent neatly embroidered by Gandhi who was 74.

Under his direction, a lady once had to do patch-work with some suitable pieces of khadi on a favourite shawl of Gandhi. As a representative of his poor countrymen, he sat at the Round Table Conference beside the British Prime Minister and attended a tea party at the Buckingham Palace with that shawl on. He never cared for show, but detested a shabby, torn dress. Once in a meeting, he noticed a hole in the khadi wrap of a co-worker. Immediately he sent this note to him: “To wear torn clothes is a sign of laziness and, therefore, shame, but to wear patched clothes proclaims poverty or renunciation or industry. I could not appreciate the rent in your cheddar. It is not a sign of poverty or simplicity. It is a sign of no wife, bad wife or laziness.”

Washerman

BARRISTER GANDHI used to go to the court in a neat European dress. Everyday he needed a fresh clean collar to match his shirt. He changed shirt every alternate day and his washing bill was heavy. The washerman was often late in delivering clothes. Gandhi had to spend a lot for a good stock of clothes. Even three dozens of shirts with collars were not enough to cope with the sweet will of the dhobi.



Gandhi wanted to cut down his expenses. One day he came home with a complete set of washing outfit. He bought a book on washing and read it carefully. When he got instructions for good washing, he began to practise it. Poor Kasturba was not allowed to remain a spectator of the show. Gandhi taught her the art of washing. This new fad was an additional burden on Gandhi's daily routine of work, but he was not a man to accept defeat. He was determined to get rid of the washerman's tyranny and become self-reliant. One day he washed a collar and starched it. Not being used to the work, he ironed it with an iron not hot enough, putting little pressure. He was afraid of burning it. He went to the court with that collar on. It was over starched and stood still. His friends chuckled at this sight. Gandhi was least disturbed and said: "Well, this is my first attempt in washing, hence this overdose of starch. But it does not matter. At least it provided you with so much fun."

"But is there any lack of laundries here?" asked one.

"No, the laundry bill is very heavy. The charge for washing a single collar is almost as much as its price and even then there is the eternal dependence on the washerman. I prefer by far to wash my things myself." Later he proved to be an expert dhobi.

Gokhale once came to stay with Gandhi who revered him as his guru. Gokhale was to attend a big party. His scarf got crumpled but there was no time to get it washed by a dhobi. Gandhi asked him: "Shall I nicely iron it?" Gokhale replied: "I can trust your capacity as a lawyer but not as a washerman. What if you spoil it?" Gandhi insisted and ironed it. Gokhale was pleased with the work. Gandhi was then so happy that he said that he did not care at all if the whole world denied him a certificate.

In his ashrams in South Africa, there was scarcity of water and women had to go to a distant spring for washing. Gandhi helped them. In the early stage of khadi production, very thick and heavy sarees were woven on handlooms. The ashram women agreed to wear them but they all grumbled when they had to wash them. Gandhi offered his services as a dhobi. He was not ashamed of washing other's clothes. Once he was the guest of a rich man. After entering the bathroom, he saw a clean dhoti lying on the door. He finished his bath and washed that dhoti along with his own. He took them out to spread in the sun. He was particular about drying white clothes in the sun, as that made them look bright and killed germs. The host said in protest: "Bapuji, what are you doing?" Gandhi said: "Why, what's wrong in it? The clean dhoti would have got dirty, so I washed it. I am not ashamed of doing a bit for keeping things clean." Gandhi was not put to shame but his host was.

In jail, in his old age, Gandhi sometimes washed his loin-cloth, his napkin and handkerchief and saved his co-workers from doing extra work. During Kasturba's last illness in the Aga Khan palace, Gandhi picked up handkerchiefs used by her and washed them.

He was particular about his dress all through his life. As a small boy, he competed with other boys in washing his fine mill dhoti white. He drew water from a well and washed it. Gandhi admired simple habits but hated shabby and rumpled clothes. He kept his loin-cloth, wrap and napkin spotlessly clean and uncreased. He was a picture of cleanliness.

Barber



AFTER A WEEK of his arrival in South Africa, Gandhi had to spend one night in a big city in connection with his legal work. He hired a cab and asked the coachman to take him to the leading hotel. Gandhi saw the manager of the hotel and asked for a room. The white manager eyed him from top to toe and said: “Sorry, we are full up. No room is free.” Gandhi had to spend the night in the shop of an Indian friend. When he related the incident, the friend asked: “How did you ever expect to get admission in a hotel?” “Why not?” Gandhi asked in surprise. “Well, you will come to know everything in time,” the friend said. And Gandhi did come to know a lot about the insults borne by the Indians in South Africa. He was slapped, boxed and kicked, was pushed out from a train and a footpath, because he was a coloured Indian. Still he failed to understand why the whites hated and ill-treated the “blackies”. Were not all men sons of the same God and Christianity a religion of love?

One day: Gandhi went to a hair-cutting saloon for a hair-cut. The white barber asked: “What do you want?”

“I want a hair-cut,” said Gandhi.

“Sorry, I can’t cut your hair. If I attend a coloured man, I shall lose my customers.”

This insult sank deep in Gandhi’s mind. He felt it would not do to smart in pain or to make written appeals in newspapers. He must be self-reliant, be able to manage his own affairs. Immediately he bought a pair of clippers and went home. He started clipping his hair before a mirror. He could shave himself but to cut one’s own hair was an odd job. And it surely was not a barrister’s job! He somehow managed it but spoiled the rear part of his hair. With his usual nonchalance he went to the court the next day. His clownish hair-cut made his friends shake with laughter. One asked in jest: “Gandhi, what’s wrong with your hair? Rats have nibbled at it last night?” Gandhi replied in earnest: “No. The white barber refused to touch the black hair of a black man, so I decided to cut it myself, no matter how badly.”

This was Gandhi's first attempt in hair-cutting at the age of 28. Afterwards he often used the scissors and the clippers. In his ashrams, a hired barber's service was taboo. The ashramites cut the hair of one another by turn. Gandhi wanted the ashram students to lead a simple Spartan life. No fashion, no fine dress or tasty dishes were allowed there. One Sunday morning, the boys were going for a bath. Gandhi called them one by one and cropped their hair. They were very unhappy to get their hair trimmed to the scalp. He once cut the long hair of two ashram girls.

No combs were given in South African prisons and every prisoner convicted for two months or more had his hair cropped close and his moustaches shaved. Gandhi and his party were exempted from this practice. But Gandhi wanted to go through all the jail experiences. When he gave in writing that he wanted to get his hair crapped, the chief warder gave Gandhi clippers and a pair of scissors. Gandhi and one or two co-prisoners each day spent two hours in doing the barber's job.

When he was imprisoned in the Aga Khan Palace, with him was a lady ashramite. Dandruff was troubling her. In an unguarded moment, she asked: "Bapu, shall I cut my hair and put some medicine to kill the dandruff?" Quick came Gandhi's reply: "Yes, do it right now. Bring the scissors." Scissors were brought and off fell the locks of the lady. Mahatma barber was then 75.

During the swadeshi movement, Gandhi discarded foreign razors and took to country-made ones. Slowly he learnt its proper use and could shave without mirror, soap or brush. He must have thought it was a marked improvement in the art of shaving and gave this certificate to a barber: "Munnilal has given me a fine shave with devotion. His razor is country-made and he shaves without soap." Some of his followers were infected with this fad and found it made shaving less disagreeable.

Gandhi knew how the village barbers acted as surgeons and were expert in opening a boil or taking out a thorn but he found it trying to put up with their dirty clothes and unclean instruments.

Once a Harijan attendant at Sevagram said: "I want to go to Wardha." When asked why, he said: "For shaving."

"You can't get it done in this village?"

"Savarna barbers will not shave me and there is no Harijan barber here," he replied.

"Then how can I get myself ever shaved by that barber?" said Gandhi. He stopped taking service from that barber. When he travelled from village to village every day, he could not find time for a shave and at times needed a barber's help.

During the khadi tour, he wanted to be shaved by a khadi-clad barber. Volunteers ran hither and thither to find one. Gandhi told them: "We shall have to make the washermen and barbers co-sharers of our swadeshi vow. Barbers are good at gossiping: They can spread the message of swadeshi." On another occasion, Gandhi was waiting for a barber in Orissa. He saw a woman come with a shaving tackle all-complete. She wore heavy ear-rings, nose-ring, necklace, anklets and lacquer bangles. Gandhi asked: "So you are going to shave me?" She nodded with a smile and went on sharpening the razor. Gandhi again asked her: "Why are you wearing these heavy ornaments? They don't make you beautiful. They are ugly and full of dirt." With tearful eyes she said: "Do you know I have borrowed them today for this special occasion? How could I come to a great man like you without good ornaments on?" After shaving Gandhi's head and chin, she left her wages at his feet, bowed to him and went away.

Scavenger



IN HIS FATHER'S house at Rajkot, a sweeper called Uka did the scavenging. If Gandhi ever touched Uka, Putlibai asked him to take a bath. Gandhi, otherwise a docile, obedient son, did not like it. The 12 year old son would argue with his mother: "Uka serves us by cleaning dirt and filth, how can his touch pollute me? I shall not disobey you, but the Ramayana says that Rama embraced Guhaka - a chandal. The Ramayana cannot mislead us." Putlibai could find no answer for this argument.

Gandhi learnt scavenging in South Africa. His friends there lovingly called him the great scavenger. After three years' stay there, he came to India to take his wife and sons to South Africa. At that time plague had broken out in the Bombay Presidency. There was a chance of its spreading to Rajkot. Gandhi immediately offered his service for improving the sanitation of Rajkot. He inspected every home and stressed the need of keeping the latrines clean. The dark, filthy, stinking pits infested with vermin horrified him. In some houses belonging to the upper class, gutters were used as a privy and the stench was unbearable. The residents were apathetic. Poor untouchables lived in cleaner homes and responded to Gandhi's pleadings. Gandhi suggested the use of two separate buckets for urine and night-soil and that improved the sanitation.

The Gandhi family was well known in Rajkot. Gandhi's father and grandfather served long as dewans in Rajkot and other neighbouring states. About 70 years ago, a Prime Minister's barrister son needed guts to go round the hometown and make a house-to-house inspection of the drains. Gandhi seldom failed to show moral courage in the hour of need. He criticised many western customs but repeatedly admitted that he learnt sanitation from the West. He wanted to introduce that type of cleanliness in India.

On his second trip to India from South Africa, Gandhi attended the Congress session in Calcutta. He came to plead the cause of the ill-treated Indians in South Africa. The sanitary condition of the Congress camp was horrible. Some delegates used the verandah in front of their room as a latrine. Others did not object to it, but Gandhi reacted immediately. When he spoke to the volunteers, they said: "This is a sweeper's job, not ours. Gandhi asked for a broom and cleaned the filth. He was then dressed in western style. The volunteers were surprised but none came forward to assist him. Years later, when Gandhi became the guiding star of the Indian National Congress, volunteers formed a bhangi squad in the Congress camps. Once only brahmins worked as bhangis.

Two thousand teachers and students were specially trained for doing scavenging at the Haripura Congress. Gandhi could not think of having a set of people labelled as untouchables for cleaning filth and dirt. He wanted to abolish untouchability from India.

In South Africa the whites despised the Indians for their slovenly habits. Gandhi inspected their quarters and asked them to keep their homes and surroundings clean. He spoke about it in public meetings and wrote in newspapers. Gandhi's house in Durban was built in western fashion. The bathroom had no outlet for water. Commodes and chamber-pots were used. Gandhi sometimes cleaned the chamber-pot used by his clerks residing with him. He compelled his wife, Kasturba, to do the same. He also taught his young sons this work. Kasturba once made a wry face while carrying the chamber-pot used by low-caste clerk. Gandhi rebuked her and asked her to leave the house if she wanted to observe caste bias. He was once socially boycotted by his close sympathisers for admitting an untouchable couple in the Sabarmati Ashram.

In a South African jail, Gandhi once volunteered to clean the water-closets. Next time, sweeper's work was allocated to him by the jail authorities.

After 20 years' stay in South Africa, Gandhi at 46 finally returned to India in 1915, with his party. During his visit to the Kumbh Mela at Hardwar that year, he and his Phoenix boys served as bhangis in the mela. The same year Gandhi visited the Servants of India Society's quarters at Poona. Some members of that small colony one morning saw him cleaning the latrines. They did not like it. But Gandhi believed that work of this kind qualified one for swaraj.

More than once he toured all over India. Wherever he went, he found insanitation in some form or other. The filth and stench of public urinals and latrines in railway stations and in dharmashalas were awful. The roads used by poor villagers and their bullocks were always ill kept. He saw people taking a dip in a sacred pond without caring to know how dirty that bathing place or the water was. They themselves dirtied the river-banks. He was hurt to see the marble floor of Kashi Viswanath Temple set with stray silver coins that collected dirt and wondered why most entrances to abodes of God were through narrow slippery lanes. Gandhi deplored the passengers' habit of dirtying the railway compartments and said that though few could afford to use shoes, it was unthinkable to walk barefoot in India. How even in a city like Bombay people walked about the streets under the fear of being spat upon by the occupants of houses around.

In reply to municipal addresses, Gandhi often said: "I congratulate you on your spacious roads, your splendid lighting and your beautiful parks. But a municipality does not deserve to exist which does not possess model closets and where streets and lanes are not kept clean all the hours of the day and night. The greatest problem many municipalities have to tackle is insanitation ...Have you ever thought of the conditions in which the sweepers live?"

To the people he said: "So long as you do not take the broom and the bucket in your hands, you cannot make your towns and cities clean." When he inspected a model school, he told the teachers: "You will make your institution ideal, if besides giving the students literary education, you have made finished cooks and sweepers of them." To the students his advice was: "If you become your own scavengers, you will make your surroundings clean. It needs no less courage to become an expert scavenger than to win a Victoria Cross."

The villagers near his ashram refused to cover excreta with earth. They said: “Surely, this is bhangi’s work. It is sinful to look at faeces, more so to throw earth on them.” Gandhi personally supervised the scavenging work in villages. To set an example to them, he, for some months, himself used to go to the villages with bucket and broom. Friends and guests went with him. They brought bucketfuls of dirt and stool and buried them in pits. To him disposal of refuse was also a science.

All scavenging work in his ashrams was done by the inmates and Gandhi guided them. People of different races, religions and colours lived there. No dirt could be found anywhere on the ashram ground. All rubbish was buried in pits. Feelings of vegetables and leavings of food were dumped in a separate manure pit. The night-soil too was buried and later used as good rich manure. Waste water was utilised for gardening. The farm was free from flies and stink though there was no pucka drainage system. Gandhi and his co-workers managed sweepers’ work by turn. He introduced bucket-latrines and bicameral trench latrines. To all visitors he showed this new innovation with pride. Rich and poor, leaders and workers, Indians and foreigners-all had to use these latrines. This experiment slowly removed aversion for scavenging from the minds of orthodox co-workers and women inmates of the ashram. Whenever Gandhi got an opportunity of doing a little bit of cleaning work, he felt happy. To him the test of a people’s sense of cleanliness was the condition of their latrines. At 76, with pride he said: “The privy I use is spotlessly clean - without a trace of smell. I clean it myself.” On many occasions, he described himself as a bhangi and said he would be content if he could die as a sweeper. He asked the orthodox Hindus to boycott him socially along with the untouchables.

He visited bhangi quarters and the bhangis always narrated their tale of woe to him. He assured them that there was no disgrace in doing their job and advised them to give up drinking liquors and eating flesh of dead animals. He never supported a sweepers’ strike and believed a bhangi should not give up his work even for a day.

In *Harijan* he defined what an ideal bhangi is: “He should know how the right kind of latrine is constructed and the correct way of cleaning it. He should know how to overcome and destroy the odour of excreta and-the various disinfectants to render them innocuous. He should likewise know the process of converting night-soil and urine into manure.” Instead of allowing scavenging to continue as a forced hired labour, Gandhi wanted to lift it to the level of indispensable social work.

During his khadi tour, the sweepers once were not permitted to attend a public meeting where Gandhi was to speak. When Gandhi came to know of it, he told the organisers: “You may keep back your purse and your addresses. I am going to have a meeting with the untouchables only. Let all others who want come there.”

Two years before his death, Gandhi stayed for some days in the sweepers’ colony in Bombay and Delhi. He wished to share their lodging and partake of their food but then he was too old for the experiment. Moreover, some special privileges were forced on the Mahatma.

Gandhi once went to Simla to meet the Viceroy. He sent one leading co-worker to see the bhangi quarters there. When he was told that they were not fit for animals, he said in agony: “Today we have reduced the bhangis to the level of beasts. They earn a few coppers but only at the expense of their human dignity. Look at a bhangi as he eats his food cowering under the shadows of the latrine wall, surrounded by filth. It is enough to break one’s heart.” The sight of a bhangi carrying the night-soil basket on the head made him sick. He told how with the use of proper implements, scavenging could be done neatly. It was a fine art and he did it without becoming filthy himself.

Once a foreigner asked Gandhi: "If you are made the Viceroy of India for a day, what will you do?"

Gandhi said: "I shall clean the Augean stables of the scavengers near the Viceroy's house."

"Supposing your term is extended a day more, then?"

"The very same work shall I do the next day."

Cobbler



AT THEAGE OF 63, Gandhi was imprisoned in the Yeravda prison with Vallabhbhai Patel. Vallabhbhai needed a pair of sandals but that year there was no good shoe-maker in the jail. Gandhi said: "If I can get some good leather, I call make a pair for you. Let me see if I remember that art which I had learnt long ago. I was a very good cobbler. A sample of my workmanship can be seen in the Khadi Pratisthan Museum at Sodepur. I sent that pair of sandals for '_'. He said he could not use them as footwear but only as an ornament for his head. I made a number of them on Tolstoy Farm." In 1911, Gandhi wrote to his nephew: "I am mostly busy making sandals these days. I like the work and it is essential too. I have already made about 15 pairs. When you need new ones, please send me the measurements."

He learnt this craft in South Africa from his devoted German friend Kallenbach. Gandhi taught others to make shoes and they excelled their teacher in shoe-making. Shoes made by them were sold outside the farm. At that time, Gandhi set a fashion in wearing sandal-shoes with trousers. In tropical countries, they were more comfortable than covered shoes and could as well be worn with socks in winter.

Sardar Patel, Jawaharlal and others once went to Sevagram for Gandhi's advice. They found him busy instructing a batch of trainees: "The strips should be here, the stitches should be there like this and there should be cross pieces of leather on the sole where the pressure is the heaviest." They were getting the defects corrected by Gandhi. One of the leaders complained: "But they are robbing us of our time. Gandhi retorted: "Don't grudge the lesson they are having. If you feel like, you can also watch how a good sandal is made."

Another day, Gandhi and some co-workers were seen witnessing the full process of flaying a dead bull by village tanners. They neatly ripped open the dead animal with a village knife without damaging the hide. Their skill impressed Gandhi. He was told that none, not even surgeons, could do that work better than a village tanner. To him every medical student who dissected and skinned the human bodies was a tanner. A doctor's job is respected whereas a sweeper's or a tanner's occupation is despised. They are untouchables to the Hindus.

Gandhi did not stop at learning shoe-making. He wanted to be a tanning expert. What else could he do? So many persons all over the world wear leather shoes and that leather is mostly procured by killing healthy animals - cows and bulls, sheep and goats. Gandhi was a believer in non-violence. A man who did not give beef-tea or eggs to his dying wife or sick son, was the last person to agree to slaughter animals for wearing shiny shoes. But he needed leather.

He decided to use the hide of only such animals that died a natural death. Shoes and sandals made from such leather became known as *ahimsak chappals*. It was easier to treat hides of slaughtered animals than the hides of carcasses and tanneries did not supply *ahimsak* leather; hence Gandhi had to learn the art of tanning.

He found out that raw hide worth nine crores of rupees was exported front India every year. After being treated scientifically, finished leather articles costing crores of rupees were imported in India from abroad. This did not only mean a loss of money but loss of an opportunity of using our skill and intelligence for tanning raw hides and of making good leather articles. Like spinners and weavers, hundreds of tanners and cobblers were deprived of their livelihood. Gandhi wondered since when tanning had become a degrading calling. It could not have been so in ancient times. But today, a million tanners do this work and are counted as untouchables from generation to generation. The higher classes despise them and they lead a life deprived of art, education, cleanliness and dignity. Tanners, sweepers and shoe-makers serve society and do useful work, yet observance of caste forces a part of the nation to live a miserable life. In other countries, a man does not become a poor illiterate untouchable, if he chooses the profession of a tanner or a shoe-maker.

For reviving this village industry, Gandhi made public appeals and also sought help from tanning chemists for revitalising the art of village tanning which was fast dying out. Reformed tanning, Gandhi thought, would stop carrion-eating. When a dead cow is brought to a tanner's house, the whole family gets jubilant. It means a day of feast on the flesh of the dead animal. Children dance round it and as the animal is flayed, they take hold of bones and pieces of flesh and throw them at one another. This scene was repulsive to Gandhi.

He told the Harijan tanners: "Will you not give up eating carrion? If you do not give it up, I may touch yon but the orthodox people will shun your company. It is a filthy habit." They said: "If we are to dispose of dead cattle, flay their skin, then you cannot expect us to stop eating carrion." Gandhi argued: "Why not? You may find me one day carrying on a tannery but you won't find me using carrion. I can say from my experience that scavenging and tanning can be done in a perfectly healthy and clean manner."

A tannery section was opened by Gandhi at the ashrams in Sabarmati and Wardha. It started on a small scale but later had a pucka building for storing hides. Gandhi collected Rs.50,000 for the building where the ashram boys did tanning work helped by expert chamars. Leather goods made there were sold in the open market. The entire work was done with dead cattle hides.

Gandhi visited the National Tannery in Calcutta and with keen interest saw the process of manufacturing chrome leather. He marked how salted cow hides were limed to take of hair, how dyeing was done. He also kept in touch with the research work that was being done in Tagore's Santiniketan for improving the village tanning. Gandhi did not want to scrap the ancient method of village tanning, nor did he like to remove from villages tanning and such other industries to cities, as that would have meant sure ruin for villagers. They would lose the little opportunity they had of making skilled use of their hands and heads. He wanted to find a decent way of removing a dead animal from one part of the village to another. The village tanner lifts it, drags it and thus injures the skin and reduces the value of the hide. He does not know how to utilise the bones. He throws them to dogs and incurs a loss. Handles and buttons made from bones come to India from foreign lands. Powdered bones also serve as a: good manure.

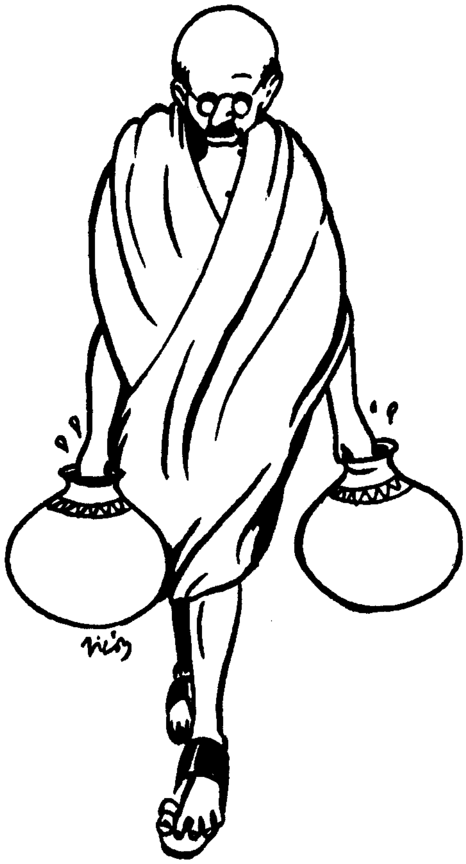
Gandhi went to the chamars' huts, mixed with them, and talked with them. They too put great trust in him and looked up to him as a friend determined to improve their lot. When he visited their colony, they complained of the lack of drinking water. They told him how they were not allowed to use the public well or to enter a temple, how people shunned their company and how they were compelled to live in the outskirts of a village or a city. Gandhi felt hurt and ashamed. He did not believe in doing charity to them. He wanted them to stand on their own legs. With Tagore, he prophesied that an evil day dawned upon India when body labour began to be looked down upon and a day would come when those who denied human rights to their brethren would have to answer for their unjust and unkind acts.

Gandhi felt the need of a band of dedicated workers who would see that the tanners got proper wages, real education and medical aid. They would conduct night schools; take the Harijan children out for picnics and sightseeing. He himself opened night schools in the chamar quarters and concentrated on doing Harijan work.

The chamars in return tried to respond to his appeal. Some of them promised to deal with only dead cattle hide, some to give up drinking and carrion-eating. Gandhi once went to a cobblers' meeting in a tattered pair of sandals. He was on tour and had no extra pair of sandals with him. The chamars noticed it and two of them made a pair of *ahimsak chappals* and presented them to him.

Gandhi himself once presented a pair of hand-made sandals to General Smuts who had jailed Gandhi in South Africa. On Gandhi's 70th birthday, General Smuts wrote: "In jail he prepared for me a pair of sandals. I have worn them for many a summer, though I feel that I am not worthy to stand in the shoes of so great a man."

Servant



IN THE ASHRAM, Gandhi performed different kinds of work generally done by the menials. Before that, when he was earning thousands of rupees as an attorney, he regularly ground wheat every morning. Kasturba and his children joined him in grinding. That supplied them with fine or coarse fresh flour for preparing unleaven whole meal bread at home. Gandhi continued this practice in Sabarmati Ashram. He spent hours in repairing a grindstone. Once when a worker complained about shortage of flour in the ashram, Gandhi immediately got up to lend a hand in grinding wheat. He was particular about gleaning the corn before grinding. Visitors often found this great man in loin-cloth busy with gleaning. He felt no shame in doing any manual labour in the presence of outsiders. Once a collegian, proud of his English, came to meet Gandhi. After the interview he said: "Bapu, if I can be of any service to you, please let me know." He expected that he would be given some literary work. Gandhi sensed it and said: "Well, if you can spare time now, please glean this plate of wheat." The man was in a fix. After an hour he got tired of gleaning and bade good-bye in a weary tone.

For some years Gandhi served as an assistant storekeeper in the ashram. After morning prayers, he used to go to the kitchen to peel vegetables. If he noticed dirt or cobwebs in any corner of the kitchen or storeroom, he took his co-workers to task. He was well aware of the food values of vegetables, fruits and grains. Once, an ashramite cut potatoes without washing them. Gandhi explained to him why lemons and potatoes should always be washed before cutting. Another inmate once felt hurt when he was given bananas with black mark on the skin. Gandhi said that he gave them to him because they were particularly suitable for his digestive system. Gandhi often distributed food to the ashramites who thus had little chance of complaining against the insipid boiled dishes served to them. In South African prison, he served food twice a day to hundreds of fellow prisoners.

One of the ashram rules was that everyone should clean his own utensils. The kitchen pots were cleaned by different groups in turn. One day Gandhi chose to clean the big heavy cooking pans covered with soot. Smearing his hands with ash, Gandhi was trying hard to scrub a pan. Suddenly Kasturba appeared on the spot, caught hold of the pan and said: "This is not your job, there are other persons to do it." Gandhi thought it wise to yield and left the work to be finished by her. Gandhi was not satisfied till the metal pots shone brightly. Once being displeased with the work of a helping-hand in jail, he cited how he could make the iron-pots shine almost like silver.

When the ashram was being constructed, some guests had to sleep in tents. A newcomer not knowing where to keep his bedding rolled it up and went to inquire. On his way back he saw Gandhi carrying the bed on his shoulders.

Drawing water from a well outside the ashram precincts was another item of daily work. One day Gandhi was unwell and had already taken part in grinding. A co-worker wanted to save Gandhi from doing more body labour and with the help of the ashramites filled up all big and small pots. Gandhi did not like the idea, felt hurt and picked up a child's bath-tub. He filled it with water and carried it on his head. The worker repented his folly. So long as it was not physically impossible to cope with any work, Gandhi never liked to miss any routine work just because he was a Mahatma or an aged man. He had tremendous energy and will power for doing any type of work. He knew no fatigue. For many days he covered 25 miles a day as a stretcher-bearer during the Boer War. He was a great walker. From the Tolstoy Farm, he often tramped 42 miles in one day. He started at 2 a.m. with homemade snacks, finished shopping and came back in the evening. Other friends and young inmates followed his example cheerfully.

A tank was once being filled up by some workers, One morning, after work, they came back with shovel, pickaxe and baskets and found their breakfast of fruits kept ready by Gandhi in several plates. One of them asked: "Why did you take so much trouble for us? Do we deserve this service from you?" He replied with a smile: "Of course. I knew you would come back exhausted. I had leisure to prepare your breakfast."

As a well-known leader of the Indians in South Africa, Gandhi once went to London to plead the Indian settlers' cause. He was invited to a vegetarian dinner by the Indian students who decided to cook the meal themselves. At 2 p.m. a thin wiry man joined them in the underground cellar and helped them in washing dishes, cleaning vegetables and doing other odd jobs. Later the student leader came there and found that he was none other than their honoured guest of the evening.

Gandhi was exacting but he disliked making others work for him. At the end of a political conference, he was found sweeping the floor of his room at 10 p.m. before retiring to bed. A follower rushed to help him and he submitted with a smile. When on tour in villages, if the oil in the lantern got exhausted, he preferred to write letters in the moonlight rather than to wake up his tired companions. During his Noakhali march, Gandhi allowed only two companions to stay in his camp. They did not know how to prepare *khakra*. Gandhi entered the kitchen, sat in an expert's pose and demonstrated the process. He was then 78.

He was very fond of children. Two months after a child's birth, he did not keep any of his sons under the care of a nurse or a maid. Love and attention from parents he considered essential for the development of a child. He could tend, feed and humour a baby like a mother. After release from a South African jail, he once came home and found his friend's wife, Mrs. Polak, very thin and weary. She was trying to wean her baby from mother's milk. The baby gave her no rest and kept her awake

by crying. That very night Gandhi took charge of the baby. After working hard for the whole day, delivering speeches in public meetings and trudging four miles, Gandhi sometimes reached home at 1 o'clock in the night, picked up the child from his mother's side and laid him on his own bed. He kept a jug of water ready near him to pacify the thirst of the child but it was needless. The child never cried and slept quietly. After a fortnight, the weaning effort proved successful.

Gandhi's regard for elders was great. When Gokhale stayed with Gandhi, he ironed Gokhale's scarf, made his bed, served him food and was ready to massage his feet. He paid no heed to Gokhale's objections. Before he became a Mahatma, he once came to India from South Africa and attended the Congress session. He volunteered to clean the dirty latrines there and then asked a Congress leader: "What can I do for you?" When told: "Heaps of letters are lying unanswered. I have no clerks to entrust this work to. Are you willing to do that?" Gandhi said: "Certainly. I am ready to do anything that is not beyond my capacity." He finished the work in a short time and did a valet's job by buttoning the leader's shirt and attending to his other needs.

Whenever the service of an experienced helping-hand was needed in the ashram, he insisted on employing Harijan servants in order to break the barrier of untouchability. His advice was: "We should not treat servants as paid labourers but as our brothers. There may be some trouble, some thefts, more expense, still the effort will not be lost."

He never knew how to keep anyone as his servant but in Indian jail, he once enjoyed the service of many co-prisoners. One cleaned fruits for him, another milched the goats. A third one served as a personal attendant. A fourth cleaned his closets. A brahmin washed his dishes and two Europeans every day brought out his cot.

Gandhi was very happy to notice a living family tie between the noblemen of England and their domestic servants. He was once glad to be introduced by the host to the servants not as menials but as members of the family.

Once bidding farewell to the servants of an Indian host, after a long stay, Gandhi said: "I cannot tell you how grateful I am to you. I have never in my life regarded anyone as my servant but as a brother or a sister and you have been nothing less. It is not in my power to requite your services, but God will do so in ample measure.

Cook



MAHADEV DESAI once asked Gandhi: "Bapuji, did you have a cook before you joined the Phoenix Settlement?" Gandhi replied: "No. I got rid of him earlier. We had a fine cook but he said that he won't be able to cook without spices and condiments. Immediately, I granted him leave and did not appoint a cook any more. This incident took place when Gandhi was nearly 35 years old.

He first tried his hand at cooking at the age of 18, when he was in England. He was a strict vegetarian. Vegetarianism was then comparatively a new cult in England. He was generally served with bread, butter and jam and boiled vegetables without dressing. Everything tasted insipid to Gandhi who was used to tasty spicy Indian dishes prepared by his mother.

After taking meals in vegetarian restaurants for some months, he decided to live thriftily. He hired a room, and a stove and himself cooked his breakfast and dinner. He took scarcely more than 20 minutes to cook the food costing about 12 annas a day. When Gandhi read Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism* and came in touch with the London Vegetarian Society, he made many changes in his diet.

After his return to India as an enrolled barrister, he hired a small flat in Bombay and engaged a brahmin cook. He did half the cooking and taught the cook some English vegetarian dishes. He was rather fastidious about orderliness and cleanliness, especially in the kitchen, and taught the cook to wash his clothes and to bathe regularly.

Hired cooks were never employed in his ashrams in South Africa or India. Gandhi believed that it was sheer waste of time and labour to cook various dishes for one meal. He was not prepared to cater to the differing tastes of the different members of the ashram. He prescribed a simple menu for all. The meals were cooked in a common kitchen.

He simplified the highly complicated and difficult art of cooking. In his ashram, rice with gruel, bread, raw salad, boiled vegetables without spices, fruits and milk or curd were served. Sweets and milk preparations were substituted by fresh gur and honey. Just's *Return to Nature* convinced Gandhi that one should not eat to please the palate but just to keep the body fit. Gandhi began to make experiments with diet, which remained a lifetime hobby with him. Some of the experiments needed no cooking and some landed him in trouble. He was a fruitarian for five years. Once for four months he lived on germinated seeds and uncooked food and developed dysentery.

In the Phoenix Settlement he acted as the headmaster of the school and the chief cook. In a banquet given to the Europeans by the South African Indians, Gandhi took part in cooking and serving.

When the first batch of satyagrahis from the Phoenix Settlement were to leave the ashram, Gandhi served them a hearty meal. He prepared a heap of chapatis, tomato chutney, rice, curry, a sweet dish of dates. While busy with his hands, he gave detailed advice about the practice of satyagraha and the way of life in jail. When the number of satyagrahis swelled to 2,500, Gandhi led the marchers and served as a cook. One day the dal turned up waterish, the other day the rice remained half-cooked. They adored their Gandhibhai so much that they gulped the food without a murmur; In a South African jail, he helped his colleagues in cooking. Gandhi considered cooking as an essential part of education and proudly stated that almost all the youngsters on the Tolstoy Farm knew cooking. Soon after his return to India from South Africa, he infected the Santiniketan students with this fad. They welcomed the idea of running a community kitchen and cooking the food themselves by turn. Tagore doubted the workability of the scheme but blessed the venture.

Gandhi was once shocked to see a students' hostel in Madras where he found kitchens not only to serve the different castes but to cater for the delicate taste of different groups needing different types of condiments. He was equally disturbed in a Bengali host's house where he was served with numerous preparations. Thenceforth, he took the vow to take only five food ingredients a day. He also broke the age-long bias towards untouchability in Bihar and made all the pleaders who were helping him in the Champaran inquiry eat in one common kitchen. He laid more stress on health-giving and hygienic cooking than on seasoning of food for satisfaction of palate.

Some odd samples of Gandhi's menu were fresh neem leaf chutney, bitter as quinine, mixture of fresh nutritive oil-cake from an oil-press adjoining the ashram and curd, sweet sherbat made of tamarind and gur, boiled and mashed soya beans served without any seasoning, salad made out of any fresh edible green leaves, a sort of pudding made from finely powdered baked chapatis, porridge of coarsely ground wheat and wheaten coffee made from baked wheat powder.

While on board a ship to England, Gandhi wrote to his nephew: "Mixing two parts of banana flour and one part of wheat flour, we have made biscuits and rotis." He once sent this recipe for cake-making: "The meal must be kept soaked in cold water for nearly three hours. The ghee should be added first and thoroughly mixed with flour before you pour water over it and it should be well-kneaded."

He could prepare cake, rice, dal, vegetable soup, salads, marmalade both of oranges and orange skins, bread without using yeast or baking powder, chapatis and fine *khakras*. He introduced loaf-making and biscuit-making in the ashram kitchen. A special type of oven was used in Sevagram for cooking rice for hundreds of persons, for making bread and boiling vegetables at a low cost. One of his associates once remarked: "Lately it was reported that grass had plenty of vitamins. Fortunately the discovery was not made when Gandhiji was in the ashram, for then he would have decided to wind up the kitchen and ask us to graze on the lawn. Gandhi once visited a model residential school. He did not like the kitchen arrangements there and told the teachers: "You will make your institution ideal if besides giving them a literary education, you make finished cooks and sweepers of them.

Doctor



GANDHI MATRICULATED from the Alfred High School at Rajkot. Soon after, when his guardians decided to send him to England for studying law, Gandhi asked: "Could I not be sent to qualify for the medical profession?" His eldest brother objected because a Vaishnava could have nothing to do with dissection. Gandhi's deceased father Karamchand had never liked it.

At the age of 39, Gandhi again went to England from South Africa and thought of taking up the medical course. Again vivisection stood as a barrier. Vivisection of live animals, experiments on the living creatures for preparing serum and injections he could not tolerate. No religion tolerates vivisection. All say that it is not necessary to take so many lives for the sake of our bodies. To Gandhi the allopaths were the devil's disciples and western medicine was the concentrated essence of black magic. He deplored the Ayurvedic practitioners' apathy to new experiments. Homoeopathy had no charm for him. His great interest in healing the sick allowed him no peace till he became a naturopath.

He read Kuhne and was influenced by his use of water in curing diseases. Slowly, after making experiments on himself, on his sons and his wife, he stuck to a treatment based on the right use of the elements around us - of water and earth, of fresh air and the sun's rays. He never poisoned the body with pills and powders and laid stress on fasting, change of diet and use of herbs.

His uncommon power of observing the sick and making a full study of a case helped him to treat patients successfully. In South Africa, he was the first coolie barrister and the first coolie quack. Many Europeans and Indians sought his advice and he became the family physician of some of his clients. His method of treatment at that time was against the current rules of medical science and was later partly advocated by doctors.

When his son was down with typhoid, doctors prescribed eggs and chicken broth. Gandhi did not agree to give him any non-vegetarian diet. He took up the case and kept the boy on water and orange juice. He put him in wet-sheet-packs. When the boy grew delirious, Gandhi got a little nervous but stuck to his nature-cure methods and cured him. He succeeded in handling more cases of typhoid without using injections.

He defied a doctor's ruling more than once. Kasturba was once laid down with a bad type of anaemia. The doctor asked her to take beef-tea. But both Gandhi and Kasturba refused to do so. Gandhi kept her on lime-juice for days together and cured her. He advised her not to take dal and salt. For a moment Kasturba forgot her husband's rigid nature and murmured: "It is all very well for you to prescribe it. Can you give them up?" Pat came the reply: "Surely if the doctor advised me to do so.

But there, without any medical advice, I give up salt and pulses for one year." Kasturba's tears and pleadings could not induce him to recall his vow. Both the patient and the physician stopped taking salt and pulses.

On another occasion for a fortnight Kasturba had to fast and take neem juice regularly. Gandhi laid particular stress on keeping the bowels clean. To destroy pent-up poison he advised fasts, semi-fasts and the use of enema. He believed that headaches, indigestion, diarrhoea and constipation resulted from overeating and lack of regular physical exercise. Long brisk walks were to him an unfailing means of keeping fit. In jails he maintained this habit of walking in the allotted space every morning and evening. He also advocated breathing exercises. He knew physical fitness was often disturbed by mental disorder. Ramanam meant to him complete faith in God's will forgetting all worries. It was a remedy for all ills.

When Gandhi was assaulted by a Pathan in South Africa, he applied clean earth poultice on his bruised mouth, forehead and ribs. The swelling soon subsided.

He applied earth treatment in cases of plague, enteric fever, malaria, dyspepsia, jaundice, blood-pressure, severe burns, small-pox and fractures. His son broke his arm during a voyage. Gandhi tried earth bandage on it and the wound healed. He was successful in treating a number of cases, yet he warned not to take his experiments as gospel truth. He knew there was great risk in making such unorthodox experiments and admitted that his Guide to Health contained bold views on keeping fit. He was not keen on opening a few maternity homes, hospitals and dispensaries but on teaching people cleanliness and healthy ways of living. He was more for preventive measures than for curative ones.

Allopathic drugs were not taboo. During a cholera epidemic in Sevagram he allowed the villagers and the ashramites to get vaccinated. He himself was operated in jail for appendicitis and was flooded with unkind letters from the public. He admitted his lapse.

Gandhi knew the limitations of naturopathy, still he advocated it for many reasons. It was within the reach of the poor masses of India. It was cent percent swadeshi. At seventy-seven he took it up with redoubled zeal and established a nature-cure centre in a village called Uruli Kanchan. It had no costly and mechanical appliances. He believed an ideal doctor should have a good knowledge of medicine and should share that knowledge with the public free of charge. He wanted to fix a yearly allowance for doctors so that they did not expect anything from their patients whether rich or poor. For some days he examined the patients and wrote prescriptions. One for Raju "Sun-bath, hip-bath, friction-bath. Fruit juice and whey. No milk. If whey cannot be digested, fruit juice and boiled water should be used." Another was for Parvati: "Only mousambi juice. Hip-bath, friction-bath, mud-pack on abdomen. Regular sun-bath. If this much is observed, she will get well. Explain to her the glory of Ramanam."

In his ashram the common joke was: "If you want Bapu to be near you, fall ill." Gandhi knew the smallest detail of each sick person and visited every patient on his way back from his daily walks. He gave detailed instructions as to how the diet was to be prepared, how a patient was to be sponged and massaged and how many grains of salt or soda were to be used in an enema. When he decided to devote one hour each morning to patients in Sevagram, sick persons streamed in from the neighbouring villages. His advice was: Bhaji khao, chach pio, mitti lagao (Eat vegetables, drink buttermilk and apply mud poultices). He sometimes himself examined the stool of a patient. If the patient was not too weak, he was kept in the open air. He suggested a cure for an ailment after

making a thorough study of the case. One co-worker was suffering from high blood-pressure due to nervous strain. To detect the cause behind it, Gandhi got his pressure checked before and after a serious discussion. The next day, it was checked before and after he sawed a plank of wood exactly on a line drawn on it. The third day the same was done before and after he ran a furlong on the ashram ground. On the last day, there was a fall in his blood-pressure, on two previous occasions it rose higher. Gandhi's prescription to him was: "Whenever you feel a higher pressure, walk it off." Gandhi's most important work or talk could be interrupted by anyone seeking his advice on food, bath and treatment of patients. Many well-known leaders were kept under his strict vigilance, lest they disobey his orders. In jail too, he obtained permission to attend on his co-workers.

A co-worker suffering from asthma sought his help. Gandhi asked him to stop smoking and he agreed. Three days passed without any improvement. He could not help smoking secretly one or two cigarettes a day. One night as he struck a match for lighting a cigarette, a torch flashed on his face. He saw Gandhi standing before him. He begged Gandhi's pardon and gave up smoking. Asthma soon left him for good. Badshah Khan had some scalp trouble. Gandhi suggested a home remedy that pained the tall pathan leader more than the disease. A thorn once entered Vallabhbhai's foot. Gandhi used burnt bibba, a marking-nut, as a substitute for iodine. Vallabhbhai said: "I prefer the pain of the thorn to this biting cure."

Nurse

SOME CONGRESS leaders once went to Sevagram for Gandhi's advice. They found him busy giving wetsheet-packs and hip-baths to two ashramites suffering from fever. One of them asked: "Must you do all these things yourself?" Gandhi replied: "Who else is to do it? If you go to the village, you will find that out of 600 there 300 are ill." From boyhood Gandhi had a passion for nursing. After school hours he ran back home to nurse his ailing father. He gave his father medicine, dressed his wound and prepared drugs prescribed by the vaidyas. As he grew older his craving for serving the sick grew stronger. He decided to devote two hours daily for nursing in a charitable hospital in South Africa. There he learnt to dispense prescriptions. To find time for this work, he handed over many legal cases to a Muslim friend, as he could not attend to all the legal work brought to him.

In 1896, when Gandhi came to India for a short time, he kept very busy in informing the Indian leaders about the plight of Indians settled in South Africa. His time was taken up in writing and distributing the Green Pamphlet. Yet the moment he came to know that his brother-in-law was seriously ill and his sister could not afford to employ a nurse, he brought the patient to his house, put him in his own room and nursed him day and night.

For about one month, Gandhi dressed the wound of his eight-year-old son who fractured his arm. He undid the doctor's bandage, washed the wound, applied a clean earth poultice and tied up the arm till it healed. Another ten-year-old son had an attack of typhoid. For 40 days Gandhi nursed him. He wrapped up the child's body in wet cloth enclosed it in dry blankets in spite of his piteous cries. He took great care of and showed tender love for his patients but did not allow any lapse in treatment. While nursing another typhoid case, Gandhi, for a fortnight, applied earth treatment and hip-bath to a child. Every hour and a half he placed on its abdomen a new pack of mud one inch deep. After remission of fever, the child was allowed to have a diet of ripe bananas. Gandhi himself mashed the bananas for 15 minutes and coaxed the child to eat them. He did not entrust that work to its mother lest the patient was overfed. While treating the sick, Gandhi tried to keep the patient's mind at peace.

He was against all addiction but once when a South Indian boy was ill and craved for a cup of coffee, he himself prepared it and served it to him.

He sponged the patients, gave enema and baths and applied mud-poultices. He was more than a nurse to his patients. He had no fear of any infection. A leper beggar once came to him. Gandhi offered him shelter, dressed his wounds for some days and later sent him to a hospital. One fellow prisoner developed symptoms of leprosy. Gandhi got permission to visit him regularly. He was later sheltered in Sevagram for years. Gandhi daily dressed his wounds.

On two historic occasions, Gandhi found a greater scope for offering his service as a nurse. One was the Boer War and the other the Zulu rebellion. On both the occasions he raised an Indian Ambulance Corps that tended the sick and carried the wounded. He proved an able leader of the nursing squad and marched miles and miles bearing the wounded on a stretcher. He was happy to nurse the Zulus who were flogged and left unattended, as the white sisters of mercy refused to nurse them. Their wounds were festering. Gandhi also dispensed prescriptions for the white soldiers. For his service he was awarded the Zulu War Medal and the Kaisar-i-Hind gold medal.

When plague broke out in the gold mines of South Africa, many Indian labourers fell sick. The moment Gandhi heard of it, he went there with four assistants. No hospital was nearby. A vacant godown was broken open, some beds were installed in it and 23 patients were removed there. The municipality thanked Gandhi for this prompt action and supplied him with disinfectants and sent a nurse. She had a good stock of brandy as a preventive. Gandhi had little faith in it. He gave medical aid and cleaned the patients' beds, sat by their bedside at night and cheered them up. With the permission of the attending doctor he applied earth treatment to three patients. Two of them survived. All other patients, including the nurse, died. To keep fit for rendering service he considered to be as much a duty of a nurse to look after oneself as to look after the needs of a patient. He always took precaution and never ate to his fill when overworked. Gandhi was an expert in giving enema, hip-baths, sitzbaths and oil-massage and in applying mud packs and wetsheet-packs. For bringing down his blood-pressure he often applied mud-poultice on his head. With an earth bandage on his forehead he said to the Japanese poet Yone Noguchi: "I sprang from Indian earth and so it is Indian earth that crowns me."

He seldom got disturbed at the critical turn of a patient's condition and with cool nerve nursed his wife and his sons. Kasturba twice fell seriously ill in South Africa. The doctors gave little hope of her recovery. Gandhi nursed her with patience, courage and alertness. After her release from the South African jail, she grew very weak. Gandhi helped her to clean her teeth, made coffee for her, gave her enema, cleaned her bed-pan and once tried to comb her hair. Early in the morning he carried her out from the bedroom and laid her whole day in the open air, in the shade of a tree. As the sun changed its course, he shifted the bed.

To get a trained Indian nurse in South Africa was difficult and there was every chance of a white midwife's refusal to attend a coloured woman. When Kasturba was bearing a child, Gandhi made a study of midwifery and helped the safe delivery of his last child.

In the Aga Khan Palace, during Kasturba's last illness, Gandhi at 75 tried to give her relief by giving hip-baths. This nurse-cum-compounder was highly praised by the nurses who attended him when he underwent an operation for appendicitis in Yeravda jail. A nurse said: "Nursing is not always a joy but it has been a pure joy and a privilege to nurse Mr. Gandhi. The doctor told me, "You did not use to print your reports like this before." I told him, "Nor had I such a patient before."

Teacher



GANDHI WAS married at the age of 13 to Kasturba who was of the same age. She was illiterate. The teenager husband tried to teach her the three R's but failed miserably. On the way to England in 1914 by ship, he daily taught Gujarati to Kallenbach for one hour and explained and read the Gita and the Ramayana to Kasturba who attended to both with great interest. Kasturba, at 73, was in jail with him in the Aga Khan Palace. Gandhi then had some leisure and edited a few chapters of the Ramayana and the Bhagwat for her. He daily sat with her and gave her lessons in geography, Gujarati literature and grammar. His pupil bent with age and sorrow failed to respond. As a prisoner, Gandhi taught English to a Chinese co-prisoner, Gujarati to an Irish jailor and history, geography and geometry to his grand-niece. At 74, he could with ease draw accurate diagrams of geometrical figures.

Gandhi was quite confident of his capacity as a teacher. But his views on education and his method of teaching were very different from the accepted standards. Three busy workers in South Africa-a barber, a clerk and a shop-keeper - wanted to learn English but had no money to employ a teacher and no time to attend regular classes. Gandhi went to their places and in eight months' time taught them enough English to keep accounts and write business letters.

For some time Gandhi gave oral lessons to his sons. As he was then very short of time, his sons used to walk with him to his office and he, on the way, spoke to them in Gujarati about literature, poetry and other subjects. For a short time Gandhi employed an English tutoress to teach them English. They picked up English also from his English friends.

At Phoenix Settlement, Gandhi founded a primary school for the children of the inmates. He was the head teacher, other co-workers helped him. The students belonged to various religions, teachers were from different countries-England, Germany and India. The teachers kept so busy with manual labour that they sometimes came to the class straight from the fields with their ankles covered with mud.

Gandhi at times gave lessons while nestling a baby in his arms. He did not ask the students to do anything, which he did not practise himself. A timid teacher, he believed, could never make his students brave. A teacher should be an object-lesson to his pupils. Gandhi read widely and was keen on learning something new. At the age of 65, he began to study the stars.

The school at the Phoenix Settlement was run on experimental lines and had many rigid rules. Life was simple and hard. Tea, coffee and cocoa were taboo, as they all were produced by slave labour. Most of the students were residential. Gandhi seldom taught with the help of books. He did not want to paralyse the pupils' intellect by loading it with book learning. He remembered how in his boyhood stress on cramming killed the joy of reading. Nor did he attach much importance to the knowledge of the three R's. Culture of heart and building of character were the aim of his teaching. The children were taught to respect all religions. The Hindu boys kept fasting with the Muslim boys during the month of Ramzan. Some Muslim boys were for some months kept in Hindu families. They shared food with the host. All were vegetarians. They attended a common prayer and lent a hand in gardening, scavenging, shoe-making, carpentry work and cooking. The students' ears were trained to appreciate music. Every evening, bhajans and psalms were sung to the accompaniment of a piano. Instead of playing tennis or cricket, he wanted the students to share the daily chore of manual labour and thus grow sturdy. Both on the Tolstoy Farm and in the Sabarmati Ashram, Gandhi taught shoe-making. He gave elementary lessons in Urdu and Tamil on Tolstoy Farm. Literary training was imparted through the mother tongue. Gandhi knew Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, English, French and Latin.

In the Sabarmati Ashram no fees were charged. The parents were expected to contribute voluntarily to the ashram fund. Children above the age of four were admitted as residential students. History, geography, mathematics and economics were taught through the vernacular. Sanskrit and Hindi and one Dravidian language were compulsory; English was a secondary language. Urdu, Tamil, Telugu and Bengalee alphabet were also taught. Food was served thrice a day; it was very simple, no condiments except salt were used. A simple uniform style of clothing was used and stress was laid on swadeshi. Gandhi advocated co-education: "We shall have to rid ourselves of this sex mentality. I should allow the children to run the risk. Cottonwool protection is no good." Whenever there was any incident of misbehaviour among the boys and girls, Gandhi resorted to a purificatory fast.

Along with spinning, carding and ginning were taught. Thus the youngsters were trained up to learn some occupational work and covered a fraction of the expenses of their education. They did not enjoy a vacation or holiday. For two days in a week, they had some leisure to do their own work. Three months in a year they could travel on foot, if they were fit for it. In Gujarat Vidyapith, Gandhi orally taught stories from the New Testament and took classes on choice selection of the English literature.

Gandhi felt the need of a complete overhauling of the system of higher education for meeting the needs of the millions instead of the few middle-class people. He marked how much time and energy of the budding minds were wasted in mastering English-a language completely foreign to the students-and thus how gradually they got alienated from their own heritage, from their literature and language. Higher education too did not create any confidence in them who often wondered what they would do after finishing their course in schools and colleges. Higher education he wanted to be an ideal synthesis of different cultures of India based on the traditions of the past and enriched by experiences of modern times. Students should be developed into healthy, honest and intelligent villagers, any day able to earn their livelihood. He insisted that a child should be taught to read before he learnt to write. Good handwriting he considered a part of education and was ashamed of his own handwriting. He advised the teacher first to teach a child to draw straight lines, curves, triangles, figures of birds, flowers and leaves, as that would help it to draw and not to scrawl alphabets. To him the current primary education was a farce because it neglected the needs of the India of the villages.

Gandhi wanted to draw out the best from the children, to make them upright men instead of mere literates. After giving thought to education for 30 years, he introduced a system of education imparted through crafts. At the age of 63, he first laid down his theory of education in jail; later it developed into Basic Education or the Wardha Education Scheme.

Gandhi was against the use of any corporal punishment. Only once in his life, he hit a naughty boy with a ruler and himself trembled all over for his loss of self-control. The boy cried begging pardon of Gandhi not because the beating was painful but because he disturbed Gandhi's mental poise.

Gandhi encouraged students to compete in games but never urged them on to outdo one another in learning. His method of giving marks was unusual. He did not compare the work of one pupil with the work of the best in the class, but gave him higher marks if he improved upon his own class work or homework. He placed full trust in the students and kept no guard on them when they sat for a test. Liberty of the child was the guiding principle of ashram education. His advice was: "The youngest child should feel that it is something."

Gandhi wanted to have basic schools in every village but he knew that it would not be feasible till the schools or at least the teachers became self-supporting. The students of the basic schools had to learn some handicraft-the most common being spinning. Gandhi believed that to enkindle a true sense of equality and to attain real peace in the world one should begin with the children. If the knowledge of the three R's prompted students to forget the use of their hands or made them ashamed of doing any manual labour, then it was far better for them to remain unlettered and break stones. He himself explained to his small grandson how cotton grew, how the disc of a takli was made, how cloth was woven from yarn and how to count rounds of yarn. Thus the child was taught geography, nature study, arithmetic, geometry and the growth of civilisation.

The questions Gandhi set for testing the grown-up pupils' knowledge of spinning and its allied processes were rather stiff and they demanded a thorough mastery of the theoretical and practical problems of hand-spinning. Gandhi showed how basic education could make the pupils partly earning members of the family, the moment they reached years of understanding. Yet the aim of Nayee Talim was not to teach an occupation only, but through it to develop the whole man in a child. He wanted the students not to feel puffed up, if they were made to sit on a chair, nor to feel ashamed, if asked to use a broom. He emphasised that literary training itself added not an inch to one's moral height or character-building.

In his frequent speeches delivered in students' meetings and in his convocation address at the Kashi Vidyapith, he pointed out how the students were not being educated to secure good jobs and employment, but to strengthen the national life and to remain brave soldiers and upright men. It was also their duty to study the life of the peasants and to think how their lot could be improved. Adult mass education was necessary to remove the Sense of helplessness of the millions and to eradicate superstition. Ruskin's, Tolstoy's and Tagore's views on education influenced Gandhi. As an educationist he can be ranked among the great experimentalists of the world. He opened some schools in Bihar, one national college in Bengal and founded the National University at Ahmedabad. This teacher with many such original ideas, in his younger days, was refused a teacher's job of Rs.75 per month, because he was not a graduate! He then was a London matriculate and a barrister.

Weaver

AFTER HIS ARREST, the magistrate once asked Gandhi what his occupation was. Gandhi said: "I am a spinner, weaver and farmer." He was then 64. Twenty-five years earlier he had written Hind Swaraj. In it he had stressed the need of using swadeshi things and of making India free from exploitation from within and without. Till then, he had not seen a handloom, nor known the difference between a charkha and a handloom. But he knew how the import of cloth from England had ruined Indian weavers. The Indians helped a foreign government to establish itself firmly on Indian soil by showing their preference for foreign fineries. He read in books how to increase the export of their mill-made cloth. The East India Company terrorised the Indian weavers and compelled them to cut off their thumbs that wove the finest muslin.

Two hundred years ago, India used to export 30-lakh rupees worth of hand-woven cloth a year. After the conquest of India by the British, in 40 years' time, all export ceased and 100 years later, India annually used one-fourth of Britain's export amounting to 60 crores of rupees. Thus Indian handloom production, which was the envy of the world, got ruined. The weavers lost their occupation, fell back on agriculture and were starved to death. One Viceroy stated that "the bones of the cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India. The misery hardly finds a parallel in the history of commerce."

Gandhi learnt how the Muslim weavers of Bengal, who wove shabnams of world-wide fame, had become idle; the proud weavers of the Punjab left their looms and joined the army and helped to keep India in chains. What once was an honourable and artistic calling was held by them to be disreputable. The weavers of Gujarat left their homes in search of work and became scavengers in big cities like Bombay. They ruined their health and took to drinking, gambling and other vices. Many homes were broken. These skilled craftsmen turned into unskilled labourers. Spinning mills made the rich richer.

Gandhi was determined to rid his country of this dependence, to stop the import of all foreign cloth. To him, the practice of swadeshism - the use of things produced locally - was the foundation of swaraj. His life's mission was to make his countrymen self-reliant and self-sufficient. For attaining that he laid down certain conditions. He did not want to add more mills for producing swadeshi cloth. A mill is owned by a capitalist, parts of its complicated machinery are imported from outside, it robs the use of hands of many bread-earners and it exploits the mill hands. The labourers are uprooted from their native place and work mechanically like robots. Gandhi observed: "If our tastes were not debased, we would prefer khaddar to sticky calico. There is an art that kills and an art that gives life. Production by machines on a mass scale blunts the creative urge and deftness of fingers of an artisan:" He was charmed to see the "lovely maidens of Assam weave poems on their looms".

Gandhi wanted to revive hand-weaving. He advised: "If a lawyer, he will give up his profession and take up a handloom; if a doctor, he will give up his medicine and take up a handloom." He came in direct contact with the weavers and collected first-hand information about handlooms. He chose Ahmedabad for setting up his first ashram in India, because it was the centre of the handloom industry. He installed handlooms in the Sabarmati Ashram. All the inmates of the ashram observed the vow of swadeshi. They used cloth made only on their own handlooms. The motto was: "Weave what you require or do without it." A weaving class under a skilled weaver was started and some ashram members began to ply the loom for eight hours a day. Gandhi, at 45, worked on the loom for four to five hours every day. Each weaver daily earned 12-anna-worth wage. In the beginning, 30-inch wide cloth was woven and that was not broad enough for a woman's wear. The women members of the ashram had to use sarees made from sewn pieces. One day a lady complained of the short width of her saree and wanted to use mill-made cloth. Her husband sought Gandhi's advice, Gandhi asked him to learn to weave on a broader loom.

Soon after, sarees and dhotis of broader width were being woven in the ashram. Other professional weavers took to weaving hand-spun yarn but they often charged a higher rate. They preferred to weave mill yarn, as it was easier to handle. After independence, one khadi worker suggested that the Government should give a subsidy to the spinners. Another said that unless the weavers wove a certain quota of hand-spun yam, they should not get their quota of mill yarn. Gandhi did not support these ideas because any kind of compulsion would create a dislike for khadi and the weaver might well refuse to be compelled. He advised them to improve the yarn so that the weavers would have less difficulty in weaving hand-spun yarn. He also warned the weavers how their dependence on mill yarn would kill their avocation in the end. Mill owners were no philanthropists and they would draw the noose tight round the neck of the handloom weavers the moment they would see that the handloom cloth was coming near competition with mill-cloth. He admitted: “If we adopted universal weaving, all these difficulties about weaving of hand-spun yarn could not have risen. It was wrong of me not to insist on everybody learning weaving, as I did in the case of spinning.”

Spinner



GANDHI LEARNT to weave cloth on a handloom from the yarn supplied by mills. This did not satisfy him, as it was not self-sufficiency. He wanted to master the complete process of cloth-making, starting right from cotton-growing, ginning and carding. He made a search for the discarded charkha, which once hummed in every village home. One woman worker first spotted a charkha working in a village and informed Gandhi of it. He soon employed an expert spinner to teach the use of a charkha to the ashramites. The music of a humming wheel soothed him when he was convalescing from an illness. He learnt to ply a charkha soon after. He took a vow not to take his food, till he had spun for half an hour every day.

To him spinning was a sacrament. He stuck to this vow for 30 years to the end of his life. While travelling, he span on a moving train or a rocking ship. When he kept busy the whole day in meeting people, discussing important issues with them or speaking at public gatherings, he did his quota of spinning at midnight. For months, he once had pain in his right arm but he continued spinning on a wheel with his left hand.

He also span in public meetings seated on a dais. Tagore once had a long talk with Gandhi and said that he must have wasted his time. Gandhi replied: "No. I have been spinning away without a break in the conversation. For every minute I spin, I feel that I am adding to the nation's wealth. If one crore spin for an hour every day, we would add Rs.50,000 each day to the national wealth. The spinning wheel is not meant to oust a single man or woman from his or her occupation." Gandhi wanted the poor to become self-sufficient by using khadi made from their own yarn and the rich to spin as a ritual and to donate their yarn for the poor. He did not leave out any Indian from doing the Karmayajna of this age and expected men like Raman and Tagore to do the symbolic spinning. Gandhi believed that just as both the prince and the peasant must eat and clothe themselves, so they must labour. He remarked: "It is my conviction that with every thread I draw, I am spinning the destiny of India. Without the spinning wheel there is no salvation for thiscountry of ours." To the students he said: "Every yard of khadi that you wear will mean some coppers going into the pockets of the poor. Coarse hand spun signifies simplicity of life. Khadi has a soul about it." During his lifetime, he did not encourage any debasing of the quality of khadi, or pandering of the baser tastes of the customers. He disliked bleaching of khadi and asked the khadi bhandars not to pamper the popular fancy but to cultivate a new taste in people.

He wanted the villagers, who kept idle for four to six months a year, to ply the charkha. Critics laughed at Gandhi's attempt to revive this ancient art in this machine age. Gandhi argued: "Needle has not yet given place to sewing-machine, nor has the hand lost its cunning in spite of the typewriter. Spinning mills and spinning wheels may co-exist. Spinning wheel could be made universal and could reach interior villagers; a mill cannot reach a fraction of the population."

Just before launching the non-cooperation movement and boycott of foreign cloth in 1921, when visitors came to him, he sat down and worked on his charkha to show how he and his wife span their own cloth. Day in and day out he talked about it and wrote about it and inspired the whole country. Motilal Nehru burnt all his foreign clothes, took to wearing khadi and once hawked khadi on the streets of Allahabad. Thousands followed suit.

In 1925, the Charkha Sangh was formed and 50,000 charkhas began to hum. About 50,000 spinners in 1,500 villages, besides weavers, printers, dyers and tailors, found work. Manufacture of taklis and charkhas provided work to village carpenters and blacksmiths. The charkha again became the giver of life to the masses, protector of the women's chastity and filler of hungry mouths.

In the next five years' time, the production and sale of khadi increased and more than 100,000 spinners were employed. Training in all the processes of khadi-making was given to the trainees. Gandhi claimed: "I see nothing in the world which can compete with this mill in miniature. Show me another industry or industrial corporation that has in the course of 18 years put four crores of rupees in the pocket of -lakhs of the neediest men and women with the same capital expenditure that the Charkha Sangh has done." There were families which started spinning by investing only one pice for cotton. This was doubled the next day by the sale of the yarn spun and thus slowly the spinners were able to have their own cloth.

A prize of one lakh of rupees was announced for a charkha that would yield good yarn at a low cost. A box-model charkha was given the proper shape by Gandhi in Yeravda jail and became known as the Yeravda Chakra. Another cheap and a very simple spinning mechanism - the dhanush takli-was later popularised by Gandhi. He found he could spin equally fine and strong yarn on it with the same speed as on a charkha. He also span on a takli. His yarn was not very fine but well twisted and even. He presented Kasturba sarees made from his yarn. Kasturba too was a regular spinner.

Somebody pointed out that spinning adds only an anna or two a day to a spinners income. Gandhi said; “The average income is hardly three pice per head per day in India. If I can supplement that income by even three pice with the help of charkha, am I not right in calling the charkha my cow of plenty?”

Gandhi insisted on a living wage being paid to the village women and other spinners who sometimes walked ten miles a day to earn the scanty wage of two pice per hour. The minimum wage was fixed at three annas a day.

Gandhi did not measure the charkha’s worth in terms of money only, but in terms of the strength it could generate among the masses. Charkha increases the power of organisation and makes people feel akin to one another. It recognises dignity of labour and is a symbol of non-violence and humility, independence and service. It is made of cheap simple material, is capable of being easily mended and develops deftness of hand which agriculture, as a basic craft, cannot. There is no need of highly specialised engineers to make it, or of highly specialised teachers to teach this beautiful creative art. It can be worked in the cottages by the weak, the aged and by a boy or a girl of five.

A critic asked why Indians, who once span such fine counts that no machine could produce and who met not only their own immediate needs but also those of far-away lands, became poor and enslaved. Gandhi replied: “In ancient times, charkha had nothing to do with independence. It had a background of slavery. Poor women span to get a piece of dry bread or cowrie shells thrown at them by the government of those days. We have to spin intelligently and must have a scientific understanding of every detail about spinning. Turning of the charkha in a lifeless way is like the turning of the beads of a rosary. This mechanical use of it deserves to be destroyed.” Stressing the educative value of spinning he said to the teachers of basic education that the charkha was an instrument of service, not one of the professions they teach like carpentry, clay-modelling and painting. Gandhi likened the charkha to the sun, round which all the other handicrafts revolved. He also told them how by counting the rounds of yarn a pupil could learn arithmetic. Again, geography, history and nature study could be taught by explaining how and when cotton was first grown, in what kind of soil it grew and the stages of development of cotton trade between different countries. Takli-spinning could also teach a student why takli was now made of steel spindle and brass disc of a particular diameter and so on and would go into the mathematics of the thing.

Gandhi allowed his birthday celebration to be observed on a nation-wide scale only when it got connected with the Charkha Jayanti. He did not miss a single opportunity of popularising khadi and self-spinning. When he became the Congress President, he introduced khadi franchise in place of the four-anna subscription for Congress membership. Every member was asked to spin regularly for half an hour a day and to send a fixed quota of hand-spun yarn to the Khadi Board every month. In the late years of his life, he advised the Charkha Sangh to make every buyer of khaddar submit a nominal quota of hand-spun yarn. When people grumbled that they could not produce the yarn, Gandhi asked wherefrom was khadi to come if people did not spin?

He brushed aside any reference to cloth famine in India. He believed India produced more cotton than she required and there was large manpower. Cloth shortage could be remedied by planting a miniature mill in every home in the form of a spinning wheel or a takli. Spinning became more and more an inner need with him. He felt he was thus coming nearer to the poorest of the poor and through them to God. He affirmed: “It will take me many incarnations to become disillusioned with the slowness of the charkha. I would not forsake the charkha, if you were to forsake me or kill me.”

Bania



GANDHI ONCE SAID: "I am a bania and there is no limit to my greed." He was a bania by caste. He was groomed to succeed to his father's gadi of dewanship but he never became a dewan and instead chose to lead the life of a mendicant. But the bania instinct was ingrained in him.

He was very economical and had a good eye for things that were durable, cheap yet artistic. He gave up the use of all luxuries and fineries and took to wearing self-made khadi cloth, coarse chaddar and strong hand-made chappals. He made his wife and sons wear, simple coarse khadi dress. Gandhi did not eat a multi-course meal. One or two pieces of dry bread, rice, boiled vegetables, raw green leaves, goat's milk, gur, honey and fruits formed his diet. He did not eat more than five varieties of food in one day. Gandhi believed that in a country like India, where a poor man earned about one anna every day, it was a crime to allow hoards of money to lie idle in the shape of ornaments and decorative pieces. His wife possessed no ornaments.

He did not send his four sons to a school or college for expensive education that was beyond the reach of the poor millions of India. He became their teacher. He did not employ any paid servants and himself did all sorts of manual labour. He preferred to live in mud huts. He travelled all over India again and again, but that too, as a third-class passenger. In train his extra pair of clothes or paper bundles were used as a pillow. His bed consisted of swadeshi rugs and khadi sheets. Once he tried to do without a mosquito-net. He wrapped himself in a sheet and smeared his face with kerosene oil, when he retired at night. He had heard that poor peasants who could not afford mosquito-nets, did likewise.

When he went to England for the fourth time to verify whether the British rulers were truly willing to grant independence to India, he travelled as a deck passenger on the ship. He stopped his companions and his secretaries from carrying trunk-loads of dress and asked them to wear in England the Indian style of dress-a dhoti, kurta and a pair of sandals. During the voyage, a friend presented Gandhi with a fine shawl worth Rs.700. He sold it on the ship for Rs.7,000 saying: "That is all that a sole representative of the poor can do." From the number of shawls presented to him by his friends he could have run a shop, he said. He used all such money for Harijan uplift work.

When Gandhi landed in France, the French people were shocked to see him in loin-cloth. He told them with a smile: "You in your country wear plus-fours, but I prefer minus-fours," Some still kept wondering whether be was going to meet the King of England or to move about in a cold country and among well-dressed people in his scanty dress. Gandhi assured them with a twinkle in his eyes: "The king has enough for both of us." He sat at the Round Table Conference, went to the Oxford and Cambridge Universities and to the Buckingham Palace in his loincloth, patched-up shawl and chappals. In anger Churchill called him "the half-naked fakir of India" and Gandhi took pride in it. His daily food expenses in London did not exceed twelve annas.

Wastage in any form annoyed Gandhi. He said that rags may be sold and twigs and sticks used for cleaning the teeth should be washed, dried and used for fuel. Twenty-four hours of the day were used by him for various activities. He was very punctual, never late in doing any work, yet never did anything in haste. He believed in economy of words too. He made many speeches and wrote many articles but avoided the use of superfluous words. He saved every used letter, papers and envelopes, which had one side blank. According to their size, he had the bundles ready at hand and used them as letter pads. Some of his important statements, drafts and replies to Viceroys, princes and British Prime Ministers were written on such chits. When a small pencil, a gift from a small boy, and a pumice stone used by him for years, got lost, he knew no rest till he found them out after a long search. After Independence, he rebuked the ministers and councillors for using the most expensive embossed letter-heads and office stationery for their private correspondence. He warned that the copying of the style and habits of the Englishmen would ruin ourselves and drag India in that ruin. The Englishmen wanted to create awe in their subject nation. All these expensive habits should be given up. Hand-made paper with ordinary printed letter-heads in Devanagari and Urdu should be used. The servants of the people should not also receive costly addresses and floral tributes.

Gandhi was keen on saving every pie of his collection for the poor. He tried to save commission fee on money orders, drafts and cheques he received for public funds. Volunteers and organisers were chastised when they were careless with public funds. In 1896, when Gandhi visited India, he was given one thousand rupees by the Indian community. He submitted a detailed account of all his expenses. Some such interesting entries were made: Tram 1 anna, water 6 pies, trickman 6 pies, magician 8 annas, theatre 4 rupees.

Gandhi often said: "Extravagance has no room in our campaigns. What else can be the result if the local workers fetch for me the choicest oranges or grapes, or if they bring 120, when I want 12? We must become real trustees of the dumb millions." His advice was: "Do not ride if you can walk." He himself practised this in his younger days. In South Africa, more than once he walked 42 miles from the ashram in one day for making purchases from the nearest store and that too for saving a few rupees. He used to walk to and from his office and court every day.

Once admission to his lecture, "Is race hatred essential for nationalism", was arranged by tickets. Proceeds of the collection were donated to the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. Gandhi for the first time recorded a talk "God is Truth" by giving audition to a gramophone company. In half an hour, he made Rs.65,000 and donated it to the Harijan Fund. He was no less good at making money than at saving it. When the Government banned his books, he openly hawked them and sold some copies of Hind Swaraj at rupees five, ten and fifty. It was originally priced at four annas. During the Dandi March, half a tola of the natural salt picked up by him was bought by an admirer for Rs.525. The price of half a tola of gold at that time was Rs.40. Nowhere in the world had any bania sold salt at such a fantastic price.

He knew people were eager to collect his autograph. He demanded five rupees for his autograph. Donors giving thousands were not exempted from paying this fee when they took his autograph. To push up the sale of khadi, Gandhi once acted as a salesman. With yardstick on the right and khadi heap on the left, he went on signing vouchers and made a very brisk sale. In 50 minutes he sold 500 rupees worth of khadi. On another occasion, during a journey, he sold khadi at every wayside railway station. At a khadi exhibition opened by him, 4,000 rupees worth of khadi was sold in a week. Ordinarily the yearly sale of khadi there did not exceed Rs.6,000. Owing to his appeal, a khadi bhandar could raise its sale to Rs.65,312 from Rs.48 per year. He asked all the visitors to handicrafts exhibition at the Congress session to become voluntary advertising agents of the hand-made goods exhibited.

His preaching of boycott of foreign goods caused 50 per cent decrease in the annual sale of foreign cloth in Bengal. Other provinces followed suit and almost paralysed the foreign trade. He felt that with India's growing wants, she must also grow her imports but the British trade could be favoured only when it was not hurtful to India. Gandhi knew it was not enough to wear khadi and surround oneself with videshi articles. Big merchants and industrialists, in partnership with the British, allowed their country to be robbed. He wanted to make the whole of India khadi and to revive the dying cottage industries.

He got no or grant from the hostile Government and the apathy of the people was disheartening yet he was determined to teach people self-help to rely upon their own labour and skill for the production of articles of food, clothing and other basic needs. All-India Village Industries Association and All-India Spinning Association were established and several branches of them were opened all over India. Magan Museum at Wardha was turned into a hive of such activities as spinning, weaving, papermaking, leather work, oil-pressing, paddy-husking, soap-making, bee-keeping, carpentry and smithery. Gandhi emphasised that no cloth could be cheaper than that spun and woven in one's home, as no bread could be cheaper than the home-baked one made from grain grown in one's home. To him life was more than money and people's lethargy induced by continuous unemployment was most depressing. Judging from the point of view of national well-being, he tried to revise our notion of economics. He pleaded: "Do you know that in spite of plenty of foodstuffs we produce, we import wheat from outside? We will eat rice polished of its substance and eat less nutritious sugar. We will pay for the less nutritious mill-ground things and purchase ill-health in bargain. We have suffered the village oil-man to be driven to extinction. The villager today is not half so intelligent or resourceful as the villager of 50 years ago. He constantly gives and gets little in return. Under my scheme, nothing will be allowed to be produced by the cities which can be produced equally well by the villagers." He asked the people to husk their own rice, to grind their own wheat, to use fresh gur instead of sugar and to spin and weave. He used to sample out rich brown gur to foreign visitors.

Gandhi told his countrymen to forget that khadi has to compete with mill-cloth: "The mill owner will always concentrate on cheapening it, but we must concentrate on justice and a fair wage, a living wage. Otherwise, it is an unconscious exploitation." A paper manufacturer was paying the labourers at six pice per day and hoped to make hand-made paper still cheaper. Gandhi told him he would not buy it at a cheaper rate.

He wanted to eliminate the middleman who sponged upon the farmers and village artisans. He knew that the tillers of the soil did not get the full value of their produce. Only a fraction of the price paid by the consumers reached them. The trouble with them was not the low prices but the middlemen. He was against control of food and cloth and condemned black-marketing and excessive profiteering practised by the banias. He accused the traders for amassing wealth by deception and for deceiving themselves in thinking that their sins would be washed by spending their ill-gotten gains on religious purposes and

public charity. He chided the banias saying: "Big merchants and capitalists speak against the British Government but in action do its will and profit through it though the profit may amount to 5 per cent against the Government's 95 per cent. I understand the swadeshi movement had collapsed largely because, the Indian merchants had palmed off the foreign goods as swadeshi articles. I am sure India was lost through the merchants and I am equally sure that we shall recover it through them."

Kisan



GANDHI READ a poem describing the farmer as the father of the world. It is said that God was the provider and the cultivator was His hand. He asserted that freedom of India lay in peasant's freedom from poverty and ignorance. "Over 75 per cent of the population is agriculturists. The kisan is the salt of the earth which should belong to him and not to the absentee landlord—sabhi bhumi gopalki. There cannot be much self-government about us, if we take away from the peasants almost the whole of the results of their labour. Our salvation can come only through the farmer. Neither the lawyers nor the doctors, nor the rich landlords are going to secure it." Twenty-five per cent of the state revenue was collected from the peasantry. The pressure of land tax was very heavy. Whenever he heard of or saw a palatial building being constructed in any city in India, he sadly remarked: "Oh, it is the money that comes from agriculturists." Any such symbol of urban prosperity reminded him of the peasantry burdened with taxation, illegal exactions, debts which could never be paid, illiteracy, superstition and diseases.

Gandhi was not a born kisan but he made every effort to become one. From boyhood he loved to grow fruits. Every afternoon, coming back from his school, he carried buckets of water up on the terrace to water the plants. At the age of 36, he began to live a peasant's life on a farm. An acre of ground with some fruit trees attracted him when he was searching for a plot of land for building an ashram. He bought it and settled there with his family and friends. Slowly he took to farming and gave up the gentlemanly occupation of an attorney. The cottages were built by the inmates of the farm. Gandhi tilled the soil, drew water, grew vegetables and fruits and hewed wood. He soon converted the land into an orchard.

Ten years of farm life in South Africa armed him with good knowledge of and experience in farming. He popularised the non-violent and more scientific method of beekeeping that did not displace the honey-comb, or destroy the bees. He explained how bee-keeping near a harvesting land or a garden of fruits and vegetables increased the yield from plants. The bees while drinking honey from flowers carry pollens with their feet and thus improve the duality and quantity of crops.

Gandhi brushed aside any complaint about the barrenness of land, dearth of good implements or meagre water supply. The major asset of a cultivator, he affirmed, was an intelligent use of his labour. He should be energetic, resourceful and self-reliant. When an organiser of the Nayee Talim complained that the land at their disposal was not fit for agriculture, Gandhi said: "You do not know what kind of land we had to begin with in South Africa. If I were in your place, I would not use the plough to begin with. I would arm the children with hoe and teach them to use it. It is an art. The bullock power can come later. A thin top layer of loam or compost manure can enable us to grow many a useful vegetable and pot-herb. Conversion of night-soil into manure by shallow trenching system does not need more than a fortnight. Our children should be taught to regard the work of agriculture as honourable. It is not degrading but a noble occupation. Gandhi thought agriculture could play an important part in the basic education scheme.

Just before the partition of India, the Hindus of Noakhali asked him: "How can we continue to stay here, what are we to feed on? The Muslim peasants are non-cooperating with us and are not supplying us with bullocks or ploughs." Gandhi retorted: "Get hold of some pickaxes and start digging. Crop yield won't be poor from earth dug with pickaxes."

In 1943, when Gandhi was in prison, lakhs of people died of starvation in Bengal. The memory of that tragic event was fresh in the minds of the people and the Government officials. When there was fear of another famine in 1947, the Viceroy promptly sent his private secretary to Sevagram in a plane to seek Gandhi's advice. Gandhi remained unshaken and advised people to shed all fear of the approaching calamity: "There is plenty of fertile land, enough water and no dearth of man-power. Why should there be food shortage under such circumstances? People should be educated to become self-reliant. He who eats two grains must produce four. Everyone should grow something edible for personal use. The easiest way to do so is to collect clean earth, mix it with organic manure-even a little bit of dried cow-dung is good organic manure—and put it in any earthen pot or tin pot and throw some seeds of vegetables and daily water the pots. All ceremonial functions should be stopped. All exports of seeds should be stopped. Starch call be derived from such roots as carrots, parsnips, potatoes, yam and bananas. The idea being to exclude from the present diet grains and pulses which can be kept and stored." His call for self-help needed determined practice of discipline and austerity, adaptability to a new type of food habit and no begging from abroad.

During the control of food and cloth, Gandhi needed no rations from the Government stock. He could manage without rice, wheat and pulses and did not use sugar. He made his own cloth.

In Harijan, he gave detailed instructions as how to make compost manure using the things that were near at hand, the things that cost nothing-cow-dung, night-soil, urine, peelings of vegetables and deadly water-hyacinths. With labour and application, compost manure could be made without any capital. In his ashrams, night-soil and urine were conserved in shallow pits because earth's crust, to the depth of one foot, swarms with germs that turn filth into manure. Filth buried very deep produces foul gases and pollutes the air. In a short time, they were turned into rich manure. This bhangi-cum-kisan's work did not appeal to the conservative peasants. Gandhi preferred organic manure to chemical fertiliser. Use of the latter for quick return of crop was in his opinion dangerous. It might result in depletion of the soil in spite of its promise of dramatic results.

He also did not favour the use of a tractor in place of cattle plough. At the Sabarmati Ashram he tried almost all improved ploughs but the primitive cattle plough proved most suitable. It conserved the soil because it ploughed deep enough for the crop but never too deep to do any damage. Moreover, he disliked the displacement of human labour of hundreds of men by a tractor. He wanted to employ them in fruitful productive work. He had a fear that the mechanical device would blunt the creative faculty of

the peasants. The age-long system of ploughing small holdings separately was not approved by him because "it is better for 100 families to cultivate together and divide the income there from than to divide the land anyhow into 100 portions. Everyone in a village having a bullock and a bullock-cart seems wasteful." He advocated co-operative cattle-farming. Collective cattle-farming can ensure proper veterinary treatment to animals and maintain a common grazing ground and a select stud bull for many cows; no ordinary farmer can provide for these arrangements. Cattle fodder often costs more than what the cattle yield. As the number of cattle increases, under pressure of poverty, the farmer sells the calves, kills the male issues or turns them out to starve to death. He ill-treats the cattle and cruelly extracts work from them.

Gandhi laid special stress on protection of the cow, the most valuable animal, in farm economy. During his tours all over India, he was distressed to see the lustreless eyes of the peasants and the pitiable condition of the cows: "In no country on earth were the cow and its progeny so ill-treated as in India where the cow is held in veneration. The veneration now consists of deadly feuds with the muslims over cow-killing and in sanctifying ourselves with her sacred touch. Many pinjrapoles and goshalas are dens of torture." He expected the pinjrapoles to take care of dry and disabled animals and to give expert advice on cattle breeding. He preferred cow's milk and butter to those of a buffalo for their superior quality. Moreover after death, the skin, bone, entrails and fleshings of the cow are useful.

In his ashram goshala, Gandhi kept good stud bulls and maintained a model yet inexpensive cow-shed. He attended to every detail of the goshala. All new-born calves were greeted with a loving pat by him. A heifer was once suffering from an incurable disease. No medical relief was of any avail. Gandhi decided to end its life and himself held a- paw of the ailing calf when the doctor put it to sleep. There was a loud protest against this act of violence committed by the great apostle of non-violence. One Jain even threatened to wipe out this sin with Gandhi's blood. Gandhi faced the storm calmly.

Once more he shocked the rigid observers of ahimsa with his proposal for killing the monkeys that destroyed the crops, fruits and vegetables grown in the ashram. He said: "Having become a peasant myself, I must find out some means by which crops can be safeguarded against them with the minimum use of himsa. The monkey nuisance has become very acute. The monkeys refuse to be frightened even by gun-shots and only gibber and howl when shots are fired. I am seriously considering the question of killing them, in case it should become unavoidable." No monkey was ever killed or hurt by arrows or otherwise in the ashram.

How to increase the income of the poor peasants was Gandhi's constant concern. They were without work for four to six months a year and they could not maintain themselves only on agriculture. He tried to utilise this enforced idleness of 30 crores of peasants by restoring to women their spinning wheel and to men their handlooms. He wanted to raise the income of these illiterate, ill-clad, ill-fed peasants to a level that would ensure a balanced diet, livable dwelling houses, and cloth enough for their health requirements and proper education. They should also develop a will to resist. He stood for Kisan-Mazdoor-Praja-Raj and warned: "When the peasant is fully awakened to a sense of his plight and knows that it is not his kismet that has brought him to this helpless state, he will abolish all distinctions between constitutional and unconstitutional means. When the Indian peasantry will understand what swaraj is, then nobody dare hold it back from him."

Under Gandhi's lead, the peasants joined the civil disobedience movement, made salt despite the official prohibition and took the Independence Pledge in public meetings. During the no-tax campaign, their property and land were-confiscated. They were losers by money but they grew in moral stature.

Auctioneer

GANDHI WAS willing to subscribe to a bill to make it criminal for anybody to call him a Mahatma or to touch his feet. But he could not avoid a hero's reception in cities or villages. For helping one good cause or other, he moved about from place to place and kept in touch with the masses. Everywhere he was greeted with overwhelming love and devotion. He was presented with bouquets and garlands, civic addresses in costly frames or caskets, purses and ornaments. Gandhi appreciated this expression of love but did not like wastage of money on garlands, buntings and addresses in a country where the average income of an individual was three pice a day.

In vain did he entreat people to stop this wastage. He wanted to turn this waste into wealth. An idea struck him. When people were willing to give him money, why not give them a better chance of doing it publicly? He decided to auction all the presents, especially the things that were ephemeral. In public meetings, seated on a dais, he would say: "My beloved sweet-hearts (small girls) are not here and I know not how to dispose of these garlands. Would anyone buy this garland?" "Do rupiye ek bar, teen rupiye, panch rupiye"—two rupees, three rupees, five rupees—he drawled on in a jovial mood. The bid went up just for possessing such a trivial article as a lime-fruit or a flower garland. Sometimes a garland fetched Rs.30, at other times Rs.300. Villagers did not fall behind in paying handsome prices for auctioned goods. Once Gandhi picked up a casket and said: "Its price is Rs.250. No, no, I made a mistake, its price is Rs.75." When offered Rs.300, he said: "Rs.300, Rs.300. Come along, I want more. I got Rs.1000 for a casket before." The citizens of Calcutta, on three occasions, presented him with addresses in beautiful costly caskets and he auctioned them all. He said: "Don't you think that in auctioning things I am belittling the love with which they are being given. I cannot afford to carry these caskets with me. For I carry no trunk with me, nor have I any provision in the ashram to keep them ... I have seen nothing wrong about these auctions. They set up a healthy rivalry and are innocent methods of evoking the generous impulse in man or woman for a noble cause. And let it be remembered that the people who bid at my auctions do not pay a fancy price just for pleasing me."

There were rare occasions when he failed to persuade the audience to donate generously. He sold a lime-fruit for Rs.10, a yarn garland for Rs.201, a golden takli for Rs.5,000 and a casket for Rs.1,000. After laying the foundation-stone of an institution, he sold the pan and trowel to a bidder for Rs.1,000. Once during an auction, he stretched out his arms to a small boy wearing a gold locket. The mother lifted the child. Gandhi patted him, removed the locket and auctioned it.

He once announced: "I have an inexhaustible stock of rings. I proposed to sell them all." A thrice-auctioned ring was finally sold out for Rs.445. The normal price of that ring then was Rs.30. Among the collection of notes, silver and copper coins, a cowrie was once found. It was greatly appreciated by Gandhi: "The poor man perhaps had nothing else to give and he seems to have paid his all. Looking at it as a symbol of sacrifice, it is more precious than gold." It actually proved more precious than a gold cowrie of that size. A bidder paid Rs.111 for it.

Stress and strain of tours with packed programmes or the burden of knotty problems did not dry up the fountain of buoyancy or the bania instinct in Gandhi. At the age of 78, weighed down by Hindu-Muslim tension and communal riots, Gandhi visited Bihar, collected funds for the stricken Muslims and auctioned the gift of ornaments. Gandhi had no money or possession of his own. Himself a poor ashramite, he once donated one copper pice to a public fund. The souvenir was bought for Rs.500 by an admirer.

Beggar



GANDHI GOT more and more involved in public work and could not devote much time or attention to his family or his legal work. He realised that if he wanted to serve the people, he must lead a life of voluntary poverty spurning luxury and comfort, discarding all wealth, all possession. A time came when possession seemed to him to be a crime and it became a matter of positive joy to him to give it up. One after another things slipped away from him. He laid no claim to his paternal property and allowed his insurance policy to lapse. He gave up his legal work fetching Rs.4,000 per month. He made a trust deed of the silver and gold and diamonds presented to him by his South African colleagues and also of the Phoenix Settlement valued at Rs.65,000 for public causes. He himself denied a life of security and was equally hard on his wife, sons and relatives.

The last 40 years of his life he lived on donations from his friends and admirers. The expense incurred by Gandhi and his family at the Tolstoy Farm were borne by his German friend Kallenbach. All the ashrams in India were run with the help of sympathisers and voluntary donors.

Pandit Malaviya was called the prince of beggars; Gandhi was the king of beggars. In the history of begging for public cause, Gandhi created a world record. He discovered this capacity in him in South Africa when he was in charge of collection of subscriptions from the members of the Natal Indian Congress. Late in the evening, he went to a wealthy donor and expected him to pay Rs.80. All persuasion failed and he was offered only Rs.40. Gandhi was hungry, tired yet tenacious. He sat up there the whole night and at daybreak received Rs.80.

During the epic struggle of the Indian settlers in South Africa, he was mainly responsible for raising funds for the support and relief of 5,000 resisters and their families. The daily expense was Rs.3,200. India generously responded to Gandhi's appeal made through a cable. The princes and rich merchants sent money. An appeal for helping Gandhi's campaign was made in a Congress session and the audience showered notes and gold and silver.

Gandhi sent a receipt of all the gifts and submitted a detailed account of all expenditure. He respected the sentiment of the donors and did not use a pie to meet other needs from the money donated for relief work. He was very particular about the spending of public money. When challenged, he invited the critics to examine the audited accounts of the Tilak Swaraj Fund. For the Tilak Swaraj Fund he set up a target of one crore of rupees to be collected in three months. A friend pleaded that if he agreed to attend a professional dramatic performance for ten minutes only, the actors could subscribe Rs.50,000 on that night. Gandhi declined, still the collection amounted to Rs.1,15,00,000. He often said that "though the thousands of the rich are welcome, it is the coppers and single rupees of the poor people that bless a cause. Every pice knowingly given will be a token of determination of the giver to establish swaraj. He could never forget the sight of poor old people with their trembling fingers untying the knots which firmly held their pies. He highly appreciated the willing surrender of their savings to him. Besides the Tilak Swaraj Fund, Gandhi raised memorial funds for the girl martyr Valiamma, for Gokhale, Lajpat Rai, Deshbandhu Das, Andrews and the Jallianwala Bagh victims. He told the people that if the necessary fund for raising a memorial in Jallianwala Bagh was not collected within the time-limit set by him, he would sell his ashram and give all he could. In two months, ten lakhs of rupees were collected for the Deshbandhu Memorial Fund. When he came to know that Tagore was touring India to collect money for Santiniketan by staging public performances of his dramas, he entreated the aged poet to discontinue the venture and handed to him a donation of Rs.50,000 as a first instalment. When floods, famines or earthquakes ravaged the land, the Mahatma went out abegging. For the spread of khadi work and for wiping out the sin of untouchability, he made whirlwind tours all over India. For the Harijan Fund, he collected more than two crores of rupees. If money was given only to feed the needy, he refused to accept it. He believed the real hunger of a man was not for a morsel of food, but for decent living as a self-respecting human being: "I must refuse to insult the naked by giving them clothes they do not need instead of giving them work which they sorely need. I would give them neither crumbs, nor cast-off clothing."

A jail doctor once asked him: "Gandhiji, don't you think that able-bodied men should be prevented from begging? Would you make a law to that effect?" Gandhi replied: "Certainly, but men like me would be free to beg." He defied the proverbial saying that "beggars should not be choosers". His slogans, his approach to donors and his dictation of terms for acceptance of charity were uncommon. Standing on a train, on a platform or on a moving car, he extended his beggar's bowl to the audience. Usually there was a scramble for giving alms to him. Hundreds of rustics, aged and infirm, men and women, walked miles to offer their mite to him. Some brought brinjals and pumpkins and others vegetables from their gardens. The students of a model residential school presented him with a heap of hand-spun yarn, a piece of khadi woven by them and a small sum of money that they had saved by denying themselves ghee, milk and wheat for some days. Once a widow borrowed a two-anna bit and gave it to Gandhi. When asked, "Why did you give two annas only", she replied, "I did not give it to help the cause, but to fulfill my life's dream of giving alms to the Mahatma who has renounced his all."

To collect a few lakhs of rupees was a child's play to Gandhi who sent his appeal through microphones, cables and newspaper columns. He once whisked the hat of a journalist and used it as a begging-bowl. The bewildered journalist was the first victim of Gandhi's new experiment and had to contribute to this improvised begging-bowl.

When Gandhi went to Burma on a begging mission, his cry was: "It is after 14 years that I am visiting Burma. You do not mind even a famine coming once in 14 years and face it as bravely as you can. I hope that you will satisfy the hunger of this representative of Daridranarayan, who may never come again in the midst of you." He scoffed at the miserly donation from the rich merchants: "Scrap this list

of subscription and start afresh. I will certainly dig my hands deeper into the Gujarati's pocket than of others. I am a Gujarati Chetty." This rebuke from him doubled the subscription on the spot. To the Ceylonese he said: "When Mahendra came to Ceylon, the children of the motherland were not starving, our star was in the ascendant and you partook of the glory. If you do not disown the kinship with them, but take pride in it, then you must give not only money, but your jewellery." He rejected the plea of the Cutchees to spend their contribution only for the Cutchees: "If you trust me with money, you must do so in the fullest consciousness that I know how to use it and when to use it."

In a moment of anguish he remarked: "I have none of the power of Hanuman to tear open my heart. I assure you, you will find nothing there but love for Rama whom I see face to face in the starving millions of India." He often attended more than twelve meetings in one day and pleaded: "Give me a quarter-anna, half an anna, anything you can, it may be even a pie." In a civic reception, he would accept an address and ask: "Where is the purse?" At times he said, "I will not go, I will sit here alone", and thus persuaded the people to contribute. Sometimes the surging crowd kept waiting till midnight to make a gift of houses, ornaments, cheques, notes, gold, silver and copper coins, heaps of yarn and khaddar. On his 78th birthday he was presented with 78 lakhs of hanks of yarn.

A cowrie was once found in the collection. To him it was a symbol of the greatest sacrifice, more precious than gold. A murderer's last instruction, while mounting the gallows, was to give all his money—Rs.100 - to Gandhi for national work. As a rule, Gandhi needed the help of three to four workers to count the money or to carry the load of collection from a meeting. At the end of the collection, mostly of copper coins, a volunteer once came to Gandhi and showed him his palms marked with green stain by handling the copper coins which the poor folk kept buried underground for years. Gandhi said: "This gift is a blessed one. For us it is a dedication, for them it is a gleam of hope in a world darkened by despair. It is a symbol for them of better things to come."

To discourage professional begging was one of the paradoxical gestures of Gandhi. A beggar's desperate struggle for bread decrying all feelings of decency and self-respect was revolting to him and he disapproved the custom of giving alms instead of work to the poor. He deplored the growing number of mendicants in India exceeding 56 lakhs. He did not want a single individual, barring the physically unfit, to live on charity without doing some useful work for society. He thought it was wrong both to accept and to offer alms. For the able-bodied to beg was to become thieves.

He asked the victims of the Bihar earthquake and the refugees in camps to work for the food, shelter and clothing they got there, otherwise they might develop a mentality of willing dependence on public charity. It was wrong for anyone to live on public doles. To them his advice was: "Do honest good work. I want no beggars. Ask for work to do and do it faithfully. Work, work, do not beg."

Looter



IF GANDHI was a king of beggars, he was a prince of looters. He saw in India the rich were growing richer and the poor were getting poorer day by day. He wanted to introduce his own idea of equality. His aim was to reorganise village life, bringing relief to village people.

Gandhi robbed the rich to help the needy. Instead of blazing torches and flashing swords, he used loving persuasion and moral coercion as his weapons. He asked the rich to part with their money, the learned pundits to impart their knowledge to the masses, the capitalists to share their profits equitably with the labourers, the rulers to grant human rights to the ruled and the timid lazy countrymen to shed their lethargy. He encouraged his countrymen to wrest the reins of Government from the hands of the foreign rulers indifferent to people's welfare. The magic spell of the earnest appeal of this dedicated soul captured the imagination of the young and the aged, simple rural folks and shrewd businessmen. Like a tornado he sped from one end of India to the other encouraging the people to dedicate their riches, their children, their all at the altar of the nation. He shook up the dazed minds. To him the parents gave away their children for national service, the purdahnashin women their jewellery, the poor their coppers.

Once there was a failure of crops in the country. Peasants were in distress. But the Government demanded full payment of the taxes. Helpless ryots, terrorised by the tax-collectors, thought of selling their ploughs and oxen to pay the dues. Gandhi asked them to rob the Government of the taxes. The ryots launched a no-tax campaign. Under Gandhi's lead, a batch of satyagrahi peasants took the pledge: "We hereby solemnly declare that we shall not of our own accord pay to the Government the full or the remaining revenue for the year. We shall rather let our lands be forfeited." The Government confiscated the peasants lands with standing crops. Gandhi told the peasants that they had a right to enjoy the fruit of their own labour and advised them to loot a confiscated onion-field. Accordingly, a

batch of volunteers removed the crop. Mohanlal Pandya, the leader of the looting squad, was arrested. After his release, he was given a royal reception and won the title "onion-thief". Gandhi presided over the meeting and put a mark of victory on his forehead.

On another occasion, under famine conditions, Gandhi gave similar advice to the ryots. The loss of land revenue enraged the Government officials who confiscated their property and forced them to quit their huts. The peasants collected their few belongings and migrated from their ancestral homes. The officials tried to auction the forfeited holdings but found no buyer. After a prolonged inquiry, the peasants' demands were partly accepted and they were exempted from taxation that year.

In Champaran, the white planters compelled the ryots to cultivate indigo and did not pay them regular wages. They earned big profits levying forced labour on the ryots. A harassed cultivator from Champaran approached Gandhi for redress. Gandhi went to the spot, made a detailed inquiry and took up the ryots' cause. A long parley and agitation followed. Ultimately, the evil system was discontinued and the indigo planters were deprived of their huge profits. A century-old stain of indigo was wiped off from Champaran.

The salt tax in India was high in proportion to the miserable per capita income of one anna a day. The starving millions living on a fare of salt and cereals had to pay a heavy poll tax. In some parts of the country natural salt was procurable from the salt creeks and salt rocks, but salt making was forbidden by law. As a protest, Gandhi launched his salt campaign. He was determined to end this exploitation: "Either I shall return with what I want or my dead body will float in the ocean. ... We shall go to heaven if killed, to jail if arrested and shall return home if victorious." From Sabarmati Ashram he walked 241 miles on foot in 25 days and broke the salt law on Dandi beach by picking up a lump of salt. Sarojini Naidu hailed the law-breaker with a garland and *tilak*. Gandhi said: "To take a handful of salt earth is a child's play. I am going to take possession of all the salt." People all over India began to collect contraband salt. The police started a mad search for illicit salt. Palanquins carrying purdahnashin ladies were searched. While passing by a car Gandhi once called out to the police guard saying: "I have some contraband salt. Do you want to stop me?"

Gandhi decided to raid the salt depot at Dharasana. His early arrest upset the plan. His non-violent army of looters marched to the salt depot. A grim fight broke out. The police hit the volunteers with steel-shod lathis. Bones were broken, skulls fractured and blood flowed from the gashes. Many salt depots were looted in other parts of India. In a year, the salt law was relaxed. To collect or make salt for domestic use or for sale within a village having adjoining salt deposits became legal.

The British Government met with a tough adversary in Gandhi who proved that looting was one better than chicanery. The Britishers came to India as traders. They captured the Indian market and by unfair means destroyed India's hand-spinning and hand-weaving industry which once was the envy of the world. The spindles and looms lay idle. Some artisans took to cultivation, others turned into unskilled labourers. Pauperism stalked in the land of plenty. Cloth imported from Lancashire and Manchester drained crores of rupees from India. The merchant's measuring rod was turned into a royal sceptre.

Gandhi hit upon the idea of boycotting foreign cloth, liquor and British goods. He tirelessly pleaded with his countrymen to spin, weave and use home-made khadi. People responded splendidly. Gandhi revived hand-spinning and hand-weaving and formed a women's volunteer corps for picketing the foreign cloth shops and the liquor booths. He addressed meetings in cities and villages and made a bonfire of foreign fineries. There was a sharp fall in import trade and many British-owned cloth mills were closed down. Gandhi's bullets in the shape of cones of handspun yarn hit the British textile workers. Thousands were unemployed. Years later, when Gandhi visited Lancashire, he said to a gathering of mill hands: "I am pained at the unemployment here. You have three million unemployed, but we have three hundred million

unemployed for half the year. The average unemployment dole here is seventy shillings; our average income is seven shillings and six pence a month. Do you wish to prosper by stealing a morsel of bread from the mouth of the Indian spinners and weavers and their hungry children? Is India morally bound to purchase Lancashire cloth whilst she can produce her own? Do you think of prospering on the tombs of the poor millions of India?" This frank talk endeared him to the British workers who greeted him with cheers.

Gandhi spared no effort to level the disparity of income and social amenities between the rich and the poor. Once in a sweepers' meeting, a lady took two gold bangles off her wrist, presented them to Gandhi and said: "Now-a-days husbands leave very little for their wives. I can therefore, only make, this humble offering, the last remnant of my ornaments, for the service of the Harijans." Gandhi replied: "I admit I have been instrumental in making paupers of doctors, lawyers and merchants. I do not repent."
In a poor country like India, where people walk for miles to get a dole of one pice per day, it does not behove anybody to wear any costly ornaments." In some cases, where the bangles would not come off the wrists of young women, Gandhi had them cut. The critics deplored Gandhi's practice of persuading women to donate their ornaments for a public cause. But Gandhi was adamant: "I would like thousands of sisters, who attend my meetings, to give me most, if not all, of their jewellery they wear." His appeal inspired more women to make a gift of their ornaments. A young widow invited him to her house and donated her ornaments. Another married young woman, whose husband was earning only Rs.40 a month, started a fast in order to make Gandhi to come to her house and accept her gift of ornaments.

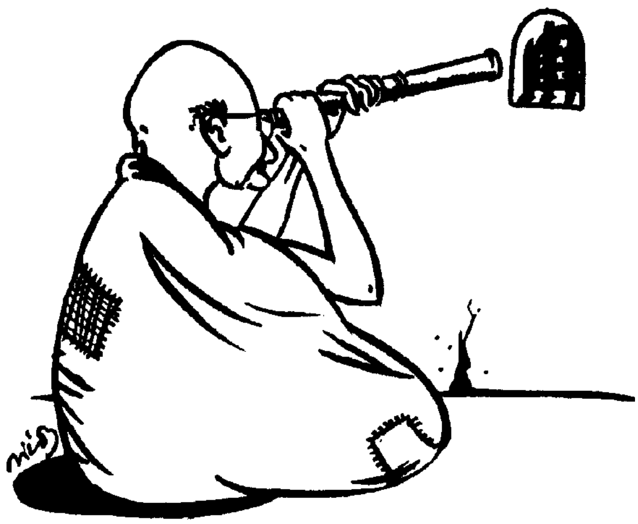
In a public meeting, a teenager girl, Kaumudi, walked up to the dias, took off her gold necklace, bangles and ear-rings and gave them to Gandhi. He made the donors promise not to replace the ornaments they gave away because "the real ornament of woman is her character and purity." Even tender-aged children were not spared. When a small girl came to present flowers to him, his eyes fell on the tiny ring on her finger. He coaxed her to donate it. He relieved a boy of his gold studs saying: "Now you must do the right and proper pranam and go, as you know I am carrying blood-pressure of 195 degree." He never accepted any ornaments from children without their guardian's consent.

Gandhi gained notoriety as an expert looter and yet was ever welcome and trusted by those who were robbed. An admirer agreed to pay him Rs.16 per minute of his stay in his house, but Gandhi was too busy to spare more than two minutes.

At the news of his sudden illness, a doctor friend rushed to him. Gandhi twitted him saying: "What fee will you give me, if I allow you to examine me?" Instead of getting any fees the doctor had to empty his pocket.

Motilal Nehru and Deshbandhu Das renounced their princely practice at Gandhi's call and made a gift of their palatial houses to the nation. Gandhi turned thousands of amirs (millionaires) into fakirs (paupers).

Jail bird



GANDHI PREACHED rebellion, launched mass civil disobedience and was repeatedly jailed. When arrested, he pleaded guilty and asked for the severest punishment. In South Africa, the charge against him and his co-workers was proved by witnesses furnished by him. The horror, shame and hardship of jail-life, originally a punishment allotted to criminals, scared the Indians. He removed this fear from their hearts.

He was jailed eleven times. Once he was arrested thrice within four days. If he had to complete all his jail terms, he would have spent 11 years and 19 days in jail. Occasionally, his punishment was reduced and altogether he spent 6 years and 10 months in prison. At the age of 39, he first entered a jail. He came out of the prison gates for the last time when he was 75.

Gandhi first entered a jail in South Africa with five satyagrahis. He had heard terrible stories about jail-life and was a bit nervous and wondered whether he was to be specially treated as a political prisoner or was to be separated from his co-workers. A feeling of awkwardness crept in his mind, when he stood in the dock of the very court where he often appeared as a counsel. He got two months' simple imprisonment. From the court he was stealthily driven to prison in a cab to evade the big crowd waiting outside the court. On reaching the prison, he had to give his digit impressions. He was weighed, totally undressed and made to wear very dirty jail clothing. Every second or third day, more comrades joined him and, in a fortnight, the number rose to 150. They were huddled in a room meant for 50. Tents were pitched to accommodate some prisoners at night only.

The jail inspector, Governor and chief warder visited the prison four or five times every day. Gandhi and others had to fall in a row, cap in hand. He volunteered to do manual labour but that was not allowed.

The jail diet was unsuitable to the Indians. In the morning and evening, they were given mealie pap (a sort of maize porridge) without sugar, milk or ghee and this they could not eat. Some evenings only boiled beans were served. No sugar and no spices except salt were allowed. European prisoners got meat, bread and vegetables. Peelings of those vegetables, cooked with other vegetables, were served to the coloured convicts. Gandhi sent a complaint bearing the signatures of 100 Indian prisoners to the jail authority. He was told: "This is not India. This is a prison, no palatable dish can be allowed here." Within a fortnight, Gandhi succeeded in getting a ration of rice, bread, vegetables and ghee

sanctioned for the Indians. They were also permitted to cook their own food. Gandhi helped in cooking and twice a day distributed the food. Without clamouring for better food or more rations, Gandhibhai's followers ate the half-cooked porridge without sugar. During his third jail term, food was no problem to him. He lived on fruits and got enough bananas, tomatoes and nuts. He liked some disciplinary rules of the jail and, after release; he stopped taking tea and continued to take the dinner before sunset.

Gandhi suffered many hardships in his next two convictions in South Africa. He was awarded hard labour and was led in handcuffs from the same court where he had practised for ten years. He was clad in the dress of a "native convict with a small military cap, loose coarse jacket bearing a convict ticket-number and broad arrow marks, short trousers similarly marked, thick grey woolen socks and leather sandals." He had to march six furlongs carrying his bed on his head in pelting rain. He was lodged with the worst type of Negro and Chinese prisoners. Some Zulu prisoners abused him and beat him. There was no privacy in sanitary arrangements. Their indecent manners scared him. He could not understand their language. He soon was removed to a dark isolation cell-4 ft. by 6 ft. There was a small window near the roof for ventilation. Gandhi had to take his meals standing behind the locked doors. Every day he was taken out twice for exercise. In protest, he did not take rice for 15 days because no ghee was given with it. He lived on one meal of mealie pap a day. Ghee and bread were thereafter given to him. He was given a coir mat, a small wooden pillow, two rugs and some books. He was daily supplied with only one bucket of water. The slop bucket placed on a large tray lay in a corner of the cell. For keeping a watch on the prisoner an electric light was kept burning after dark, but that was too dim for reading a book. If, as a change, he walked up and down the cell, the warder shouted: "Don't walk about like that. It spoils my floor." And the precious floor was made of tar.

When Gandhi asked permission for a bath, the warder ordered him to go undressed. Gandhi could not walk 125 feet stark naked. His request for hanging his clothes on the curtain of the water-closet was granted. But before he could clean his body, came the order: "Sam, come out." If Sam was not prompt in vacating the place a Negro would knock him down.

He had to cut shirt-pockets, sew pieces of torn blankets or polish varnished iron doors for nine hours a day. After rubbing the doors and floors for three hours, he found them same as before. He was also ordered to clean the lavatories. He bore all these hardships with a smile but when he joined his colleagues, their plight moved him. The fatigue made some of them weep, some to faint. He was responsible for dragging them from their homes to this life of suffering and shame. He believed that self-sacrifice and suffering was the only remedy for ending their slavery and that helped him to regain his peace of mind.

By six in the morning, ablution and toilet had to be finished. Work started from seven and they all had to labour for nine hours. Gandhi walked a mile and then began digging dry hard ground. He lost weight. His back ached, water oozed from the blisters covering his palms and with difficulty he could lift the spade. If he rested awhile, the guard shouted: "Go on, go on." Gandhi warned the guard that if he did not mend his manners, he would stop working. This mellowed the guard. Gandhi prayed to God to defend his honour by giving him strength to finish the allotted task.

When Gandhi stayed in "His Majesty's Hotel" in India, his expenses were borne by the Government, yet he disliked to incur any extra expenditure for his maintenance. Once he asked the jail superintendent to remove all furniture and extra pots and pans. He used one iron cot and a few utensils. He could never forget that the whole of this expense came from taxes collected from the dumb millions of India. Referring to his last detention in the Aga Khan Palace, he said: "The huge palace in which I am

being detained with big guards around me, I hold to be waste of public fund. When the people are dying of starvation, it is almost a crime against humanity.

The first trial scene of Gandhi in India was a memorable incident. Before taking his seat, the English Sessions Judge nodded a respectful salutation to this native standing in the dock. He awarded six years of simple imprisonment to Gandhi for his rebellious activities. He admitted: "Even those who differ from you in politics look upon you as a man of high ideals and of noble and even saintly life." Gandhi said: "I know that some of the most loved of India's patriots have been convicted under it. I consider it a privilege to be charged under that section. I know I was playing with fire, I would still do the same." When Gandhi entered and left the courtroom, the entire court rose to pay homage. In telegrams the police secret code referred to him as "Bombay Political No. 50." His name was struck off from the roll of barristers. In jail, his height and special identification marks were noted down. He was confined in a solitary cell. He had nothing but a loin-cloth on, and yet his groins were touched and his blankets searched. Gandhi made no protest till his water-pitcher was touched with boots. Out of disgust, he sometimes stopped having visitors or writing letters.

Gandhi never became bitter or fretful under duress. Every time he came out of jail, his mind grew richer and more poised. To him jail was a rest-cure where one learns to be more regular in one's habits and where good books make up for the absence of good companions. He felt as happy as a bird, in jail. He was fond of reading, but outside the prison he kept so busy with numerous activities that he could get little time for reading. In jail he followed a strict routine for study. He learned Urdu and read books in Sanskrit, Tamil, Hindi, Gujarati and English. In two years, he read 150 books by noted authors on religion, literature and social science. He read the Gita, Koran, Bible and books on Buddhism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism. He read the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Upanishads, Manusmriti and Pataniali Yoga Darshan. At 65, he took his first lessons in astronomy from a co-prisoner. He succeeded in getting a telescope from the jail authorities to study the stars.

In jail, Gandhi regularly prayed, spun for four to six hours a day and took brisk walks. In the Aga Khan Palace, at 75, he gave lessons to Kasturba and to his grand-niece on geography, geometry, history, Gujarati grammar and literature. Previously he had taught English to a Chinese co-prisoner and Gujarati to an Irish jailor. In jail, he wrote a textbook for children and the history of the satyagraha struggle in South Africa. He translated hymns from the Upanishads and poems by Indian saint-poets into English and that collection was published as Songs from the Prison. He wrote hundreds of letters from jail to the ashramites, co-workers, and the jail authorities, Governors, Viceroys and British Prime Minister. Every week he sent such charming notes to the ashram children as, "If you learn to fly without wings, all your troubles will vanish. I have no wings yet I come flying to you every day in thought. Here is little Vimla and there is Hari."

Gandhi noted down the advantages of the disciplined life in jail and described how a model prisoner should behave. He wanted the prisoners to do whatever work was given to them and to obey jail regulations so long as it was not immoral to do so. Also they were not to start a hunger-strike until they were humiliated or were given unclean food. He and his followers never sat in a crouching position or shouted "sarkar salam."

Gandhi admitted that we shall have to maintain jails even under swaraj. He wanted to convert them into reformatories and workshops - a school for education of those who in fact were temporarily deranged and misguided.

While in prison, he once suggested how the prisoners could do productive work and make the jails self-supporting. The jail authorities did not accept any such scheme from a prisoner.

This ideal prisoner at times proved very exacting and put the jail authorities in a fix. When he was permitted to eat bread, he demanded a knife to cut it, as he could not eat untoasted bread. He asked for more space for his daily walks. He treated his comrades as wards kept under his special care and he wanted to bear the responsibility of treating somebody who suffered from asthma or someone else who needed nature cure or Ayurvedic treatment and asked for special facilities. He indirectly coerced the jailors to meet his demands by resorting to long fasts. When his condition grew worse, the jail authorities set him free. They did not want to take risks with the life of a renowned citizen of the world like the Mahatma. They showed great concern and promptly got him operated when he developed appendicitis. He twice fell ill in jail.

Gandhi invariably entered the jail with a retinue of friends and relatives. Kasturba and his secretary Mahadev Desai were detained with him in the Aga Khan Palace. They both died there and were cremated inside the jail compound. Gandhi said: "They lived up to the 'Do or Die' mantra and laid down their lives at the altar of the Goddess of Freedom. They have become immortal."

General

SOUTH AFRICA made a man of Gandhi. He reached Durban at the age of 23. Till then, he was a shy, nervous young man. The moment he landed on the South African soil, he noticed how the Indians, the coloured people, were looked down upon by the whites. The Indians were called "coolies" by them.

On the third day of his arrival, he visited the Durban court and was ordered to take off his turban to show respect to the magistrate. Gandhi felt insulted, refused to do so and left the court.

After a week, he had to go to another town by train. He bought a first-class ticket and sat in a first-class compartment. At the next station, he was ordered to occupy a third-class compartment by a ticket-checker. When he tried to prove that he had a right to travel first he was forcibly dragged down from the train. He was very much shaken by this insult. Seated alone in a dark waiting-room, he was lost in thought. What should he do? Should he leave this country where Indians were ill-treated or should he fight for his rights? The honour of his country was at stake. He resolved to stay on. That fateful night decided the future course of his action.

Gandhi had to cover the next lap of the journey by a stage-coach. He was not allowed to sit inside the coach. He sat beside the coachman. Soon after, he was ordered to vacate that seat and to sit on a sack-cloth spread on the footboard. Gandhi refused to leave his seat and was mercilessly beaten. On reaching the town, he asked for a room in a hotel and that was refused. He spent the night in the shop of an Indian friend who sympathised with Gandhi, but he found nothing unusual in this ill treatment. Some such incident took place every day in that country. The Indians were used to it. They came to South Africa to earn money and they did that at the cost of their self-respect. Gandhi was shocked at their slave mentality. He sent complaints to the newspapers and to the railway and coach-service authorities.

In a short time, Gandhi learnt that the Indians were not permitted to walk over the footpaths, to move about after 9 p.m. or to occupy the front seats in a tram-car. There were particular "coolie" locations to house them. Gandhi himself was once kicked off from the footpath by a sentry and was labelled "coolie barrister". Some of his white friends wanted to secure for him permission to enjoy special privileges but Gandhi politely refused to avail himself of that offer. He was not keen on gaining a few personal advantages, but to root out the colour bar. He did not fret in shame, nor did he even in anger try to get the offenders punished.

He collected all information about the disadvantages suffered by every Indian living in that town. Within a week, he called a public meeting and told the Indians to change their way of life and to be honest, to form clean habits and to forget differences of caste, creed and provincialism. Not a word blaming the whites was uttered by him. He wanted his countrymen to understand that if their behaviour was correct, they could only then demand human rights. He kept in touch with them and patiently listened to their tales of woe.

A year later, a bill was moved to deprive the Indians the little right of vote they had. Gandhi advised them to oppose it. He enrolled volunteers, made Christian youths, Muslim and Parsi merchants and Hindu clerks work for their common welfare. Under his lead, some copied the note of protest drafted by him, some donated money and others reached this message of awakening to hundreds living far away from the town. In a month's time, funds were raised and 10,000 signatures of protest were secured. Printed copies of the protest were sent to the Governor and Premier of Natal, to the Viceroy of India, to Queen Victoria and to the newspapers of Natal, India and England. The wrong done to the Indians in South Africa was given wide publicity. The bill was passed and the Indians gained no rights, but they learnt to shed their apathy and timidity, to challenge the authority of the Government in passing an unjust law. Gandhi soon founded the Natal Indian Congress, laid down rules for its working and himself collected donations from the members.

During his 20 years' stay in South Africa, Gandhi led his people in opposing many such Black Acts. One Act exacted an annual tax of Rs.40 from every adult Indian; another refused to accept marriages performed in India as legally valid, a third demanded every Indian should carry a certificate containing ten finger-prints. Fingerprints are generally taken from criminals. In protest, Gandhi wrote and sent hundreds of letters, appeals and petitions to scores of men whose authority counted. He also met important Government officials. When all agitation through the press and the platform failed, Gandhi forged the new weapon of satyagraha-non-violent resistance to evil.

Gandhi now asked the Indians to boycott registration of fingerprints. He told them to get ready for a long non-violent fight-to march to jail, if need be, to die, but not to submit to that unjust law. His slogan was: "I want you to shed the fear of death. Voluntary suffering is the quickest and best remedy for removal of injustices." He warned them that they would not be able to reach their goal by depending on him but by understanding and following the programme suggested by him. His instructions were explained to the people in Hindi, Gujarati, Tamil and Telugu. His army took a vow to fight the battle with perfect non-violence. Uneducated men in the street, artisans, hawkers, miners, merchants and women joined the army. Gandhi led on foot an unarmed, peaceful, disciplined army of 5,000. He walked with his caravan, slept with it under the sky, shared the waterish dal or half-cooked rice with all. He tended the sick, cheered up the stragglers, cooked and served food to them all. His physical strength matched with his mental fortitude. About 2,500 persons were penalised with hard labour, 1,000 were absolutely ruined, some died. With their leader, the merchants, used to a life of luxury, broke stones or did sweeper's work in jail. Kasturba too joined the satyagraha and was jailed. In England, sympathy was shown for Gandhi's campaign. In India, at the Congress sessions, the South African problem was discussed. Sir Wedderburn, an Englishman who became the President of the Congress, said: "A good example of what may be achieved by Hindus and Muslims standing shoulder to shoulder in service of India is supplied by the latest news from South Africa. Thanks to the determined stand taken by the Indians under the splendid generalship of Mr. Gandhi." Gandhi needed money for meeting a daily expense of Rs.3,200 when he led the march. An appeal for funds was made in India. Women tore gold bangles and rings from their persons; princes and businessmen gave thousands of rupees. Tagore sent donation collected by him. The long-drawn-out battle ended in a compromise favourable to the Indians. Gandhi was ever ready to make a compromise, when self-respect was not at stake.

There were many leaders in India, yet after his return to India, harassed people, peasants and labourers in distress, sought Gandhi's help. Through his efforts only, the century-old enforced plantation of indigo in Champaran was annulled, the indenture system was abolished. He always encouraged the people to remedy a specific local grievance themselves. All such agitations gained publicity and drew attention of the whole of India.

Gandhi used the same tactics, whenever he launched a mass movement. Apart from guiding the peasants of Champaran, Kheda and Bardoli, he led four mass movements spreading over 30 years of his generalship in India. He toured all over India and studied all details of a problem in hand.

He interviewed thousands of persons and worked 18 to 20 hours a day for collecting information from the people involved in a fight with the Government. He spoke in thousands of public meetings and laid down rules for discipline. He justified his choice of non-violence saying: "There is another remedy before the country-drawing of the sword. If that was possible, India would not have listened to the gospel of non-violence. You cannot get swaraj by speeches and processions; the will to do should not be lacking. We want to become brave soldiers who do not run away. You should be ready to sacrifice your own lives. To attain this, manly power is necessary. Instead of killing, if necessary, be killed. Why should it be easy to risk death in the act of killing and almost superhuman to do so in the act of sparing life? The killing of others is not bravery. Die for your honour and freedom."

Women, children and aged persons could form his non-violent army. The children's squad was known as Vanar Sena. When there was any outbreak of violence, Gandhi suspended satyagraha. He loathed secrecy. He always openly announced his future moves. He wanted the people to banish anger, hatred and vengeance from their breast.

This hard task-master never raised false hopes in his men and told his soldiers how they would have to face lathi-charges and bullets, court jail and mount the gallows without raising their hands in protest. Their property could be forfeited. His mantra of "Do or Die" meant suffering and that suffering, he knew, would melt the heart of the opponent.

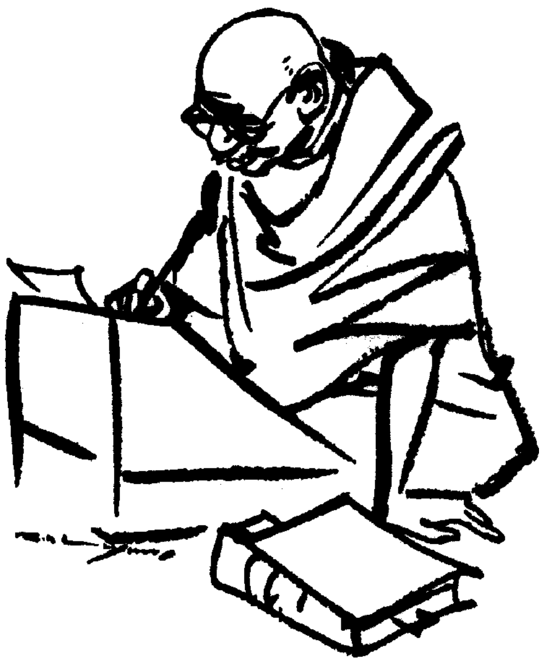
Along with his call for bonfire of foreign cloth, non-payment of land-tax, salt-making and boycott of Government schools, colleges and law courts, he asked the people to do constructive work. He wanted them to spin and weave, to revive the village panchayats and to establish national schools and colleges. His bid to bring swaraj in one year failed but minds in chain were set free. The awakening of the masses was a great gain. His march to Dandi had a magic spell. Hundreds of women came out of purdah to collect natural salt and proved that they could serve the country on equal terms with men. They also took part in picketing foreign cloth shops and liquor shops. For the first time in the political history of India, Gandhi used non-violent non-cooperation on a mass scale.

Gandhi often quoted war terminology to describe his non-violent fights: "I am out for a battle. Just as an Afridi cannot do without his rifle, even so every one of you non-violent soldiers should not be able to do without your spinning. Yarn balls are your lead; the spinning wheel is your gun. Independence will be protected not by guns, but by the bullets in the shape of cones of hand-spun yarn. You attack the Dharasana Salt Works and it will be known as the Battle of Dharasana. The destructive weapons of violent war were discarded but all the soldierly virtues—bravery, chivalry, patriotism, endurance and self-sacrifice—were there."

Gandhi preferred violence to cowardice, but attached greater importance to soul-force than to brute force. When asked, "Has not the atom bomb shaken your faith in non-violence", he replied: "Not only it has not done so, but it has clearly shown to me that truth and non-violence constitute the

mightiest force in the world. Before it the atom bomb is of no effect." He asserted that the freedom of India won non-violently would demonstrate to all - exploited races of the earth that their freedom was very near.

Author



A NUMBER OF books bear the authorship of M. K. Gandhi. Majority of them were not written in book form. They were collections of his articles and speeches on truth and ahimsa, swadeshi and charkha or of his addresses to women, students and princes. Gandhi was accepted as a very good writer. He never aimed at a style nor used flowery words merely to please the ears. He had a forceful style of his own which mirrored his hopes and faith, his sorrows and disappointments. His style of writing was simple, precise, clear and as devoid of artificialities as the life of its author. Some English Viceroys admitted that Gandhi was direct and expressed himself in excellent English with a fine appreciation of the value of words he used. Gandhi claimed that a thoughtless word never escaped his lips or his pen. A professor at the Oxford University, who assisted in drafting some of Gandhi's statements made at the Round Table Conference, said: "I have never met an Indian who had mastered the prepositions as Gandhi has ... I took a great deal of trouble over this drafting. Mr. Gandhi would glance over my work and would make just one suitable prepositional change. It did its work. It changed my meaning into Mr. Gandhi's meaning."

Perhaps Gandhi's love for and careful reading of choice English writers and the Bible trained his ears for making proper use of words. He read widely and digested what he read.

His first naive attempt in his teens as a writer was a booklet, London Guide, written for Indian students. It contained helpful details about London. Next came two pamphlets - An Appeal to Every Briton and The Indian Franchise. The first describes the general condition of Natal Indians and the other is a history of Indian franchise in Natal. The language of the Green Pamphlet, which followed, was factual. In a month's time, the second revised edition of it was published. A summary of the Green Pamphlet in South African newspapers angered the Europeans and when he next landed in South Africa, he was mobbed and lynched. To his bitter experience he found that his writings could not be properly summarised

in a condensed form. He himself had a knack for expressing his ideas in a condensed form. He drafted the Congress constitution and many resolutions.

Gandhi's experiments in diet were recorded in A Guide to Health. It is an English translation of his articles printed in the Gujarati Indian Opinion and was widely read in India and abroad and translated into English, European and Indian languages. When any idea gripped his mind, he put it in writing with conviction without any fear of being ridiculed. His urge to write made him scribble on the running trains and rocking ships. He prepared the whole of the Green Pamphlet while on voyage home in 1896. Hind Swaraj, a severe criticism of modern civilisation, was written at a stretch during his voyage from England to South Africa in 1909. He used the steamer stationery. When he got tired of writing with his right hand, he used the left and finished the book in ten days. Tolstoy read it and said that the question of passive resistance was "of very great importance not only for India but for the whole world". Constructive Programme, a booklet on nation-building work, was written on a train. His manuscripts had few marks of correction and seldom needed any change. And that, he said, was due to "the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth". His aptitude for selecting suitable words for translating an idea into another language was remarkable. He did not go by the literal meaning of a word or idea. Death-dance he called Patanga Nritya. Ruskin's Unto This Last echoing Gandhi's deepest beliefs appealed to him and he adapted it into Gujarati. It was called Sarvodaya. Some portions from Carlyle's writings and from the life of Kemal Pasha were also translated into Gujarati by him. His "Story of a Satyagrahi" is a paraphrase of the "Defence and Death of Socrates" by Plato. Gandhi translated into English the Ashram Bhajanavali and some poems of the saint-poets of India when he was in jail. The latter was entitled Songs from the Prison.

Gandhi wrote his autobiography in Gujarati. He introduced a simple, forceful style that turned the Gujarati language into a people's language. The English rendering of The Story of My Experiments with Truth has been judged a good piece of literature by many eminent persons. Apart from unfolding the personality of a world figure, the pen pictures of his parents, wife and friends, of dramatic events and his exercise of suspense and interweaving of stray dialogues sustain the interest of the readers. It was translated into almost all the Indian languages and also into English, French, Russian, German, Chinese and Japanese.

All his writings cherish truth and high moral values. At the same time they are not records of dry codes of behaviour. He wrote a primer Balpothi and Nitidharma, a book on ethics for children. He did not want to preach anything to children which they could not put into practice. His letters to ashram children were both amusing and instructive. He was a voluminous letter writer and could in one day write 50 letters in long hand. Collection of his letters, numbering about 100,000, is a vital part of his writings.

Gandhi was against "art for art's sake". For him all art had to be based on truth and literature had value only so far as it helped man to rise upward. For the half-starved masses he felt the need of simple good stories and such couplets that a peasant goading a bullock could sing lustily and forget filthy abuses. In a literary conference he asked the writers: "Did you have any thought of these dumb millions' appetites and aspirations? For whose sake are we going to have our literature? What am I to read to them?" As a model he referred to Dean Farrar's life of Christ written in a language which the masses of England could understand. He wrote short sketches of many outstanding men and women in the Gujarati Indian Opinion. When he was asked to write a biography of his favourite poet-philosopher Raichandbhai, he said: "If I want to write his life story, I shall have to study carefully his home, his playground, mix with his friends, schoolmates, relatives and followers." In this sphere too, truth and not imagination was his guiding star.

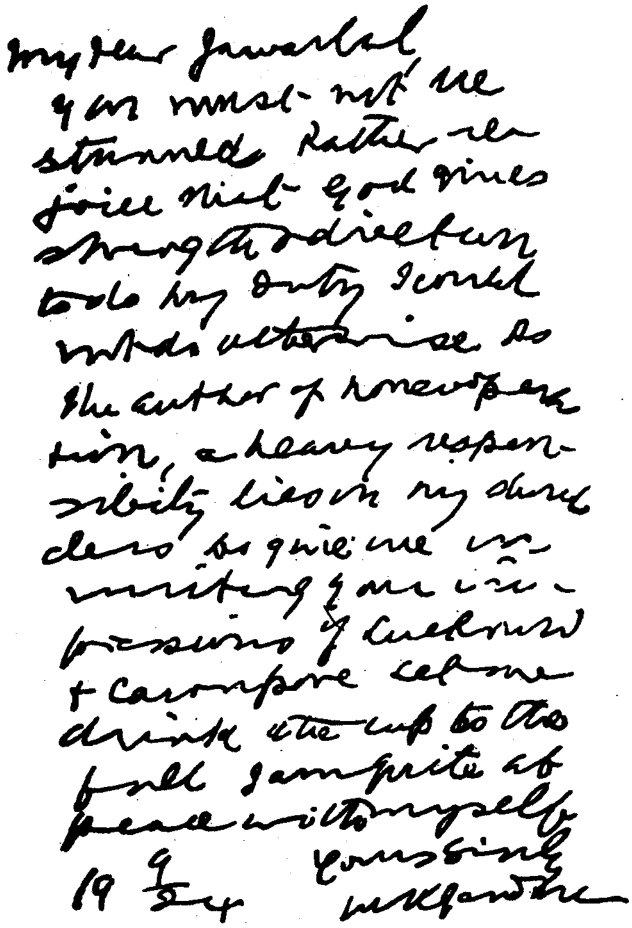
Gandhi often referred to incidents, examples and morals found in the Indian epics, in the lives of Rama, Krishna and Mahomed. This made his ideas lucid to the masses and gave him that amazing power of touching their hearts. Boldness of his expressions decrying such evil customs as lynching, white hooliganism, untouchability, degeneration of the self-seeking Congressmen into white-robed goondas etc. were trenchant and prophetic. In protest to Lord Curzon's statement "the ideal of truth is to a large extent a western conception", Gandhi quoted a host of evidences supporting the worship of truth in India from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vedas, etc. He said that as an English gentleman Lord Curzon should withdraw his baseless and offensive imputations. Gandhi once asked: "Where is Mahomed and his message of peace? If Mahomed came to India today, he would disown many of his so-called followers and own me as a true Muslim, as Jesus would own me as a true Christian. There is no Christianity in the West, or there should have been no war."

Gandhi once said that "the poet lives in a magic world of his own creation" but he himself was a slave of the spinning wheel, which was somebody else's creation. But the beauty of his thoughts and language made deep impression on some of the great men of our age. Many passages from his writings testify how with a few strokes of his pen, he could draw vivid, living pictures: "In Mysore I saw in the ancient temple a bracket in stone made of a little statuette which spoke out to me. It was just a woman, half-naked, struggling with the folds of her clothes to extricate herself from the shafts of Cupid, who is after all lying defeated at her feet in the shape of a scorpion. I could see the agony of the form, the agony of the sting of the scorpion."

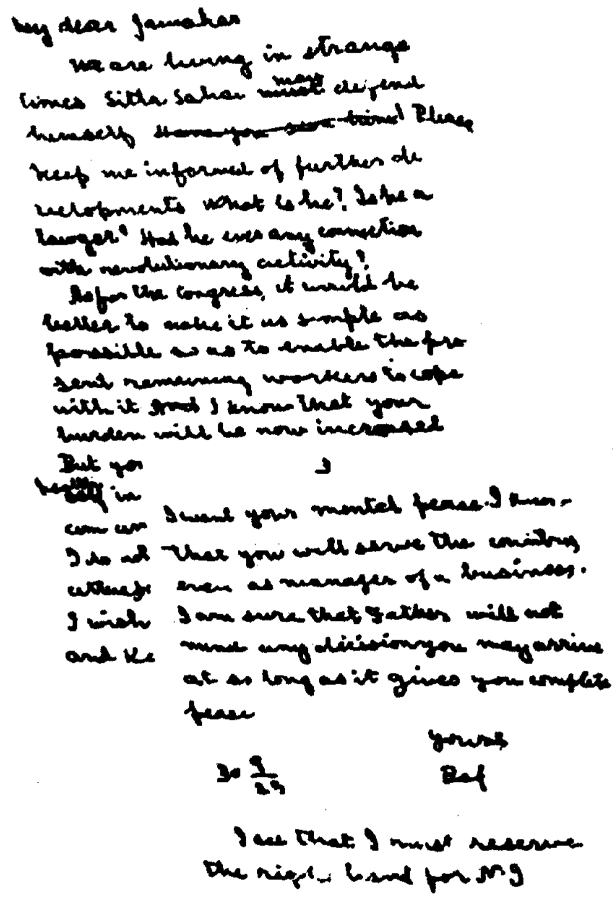
"Do you know Orissa and its skeletons? Well, from that hunger-striken impoverished land of skeletons have come men who have wrought miracles in bone, horn, and silver. Go and see how a soul of a man even in an impoverished body can breathe life into lifeless horns and metals. A poor potter has worked miracles out of clay."

"The spot lay on a river bank. The river ran between a row of homely hills shaded with trees and shrubs. The bed of the river was sandy, not muddy. The platform was erected in the waters of the river. On either side of the road that lay in front of the platform, huge masses of men and women over twelve thousand sat in perfect silence."

"Early in the morning I entered Malabar. As I was passing by the familiar places, the face of a Nayadi whom I had seen during the previous visit, rose before my eyes. In the midst of a discussion about untouchability, a shrill voice was heard. Those who were talking to me said, 'We can show you a live Nayadi.' The public road was not for him. Unshod he was walking across the fields with a noiseless tread. I asked him to come and talk to me. Tremblingly he talked to me. I told him the public road was as much for him as for me. He said,' It cannot be so. I may not walk on the public road.' You will be finding me smiling with you and cracking jokes with you, but you also may know that, behind all these jokes and smiles and laughs, the face of the Nayadi and that scene will keep haunting me throughout my tour in Malabar."


My dear Jawaharlal,
You must not be stunned. Rather rejoice that God gives strength & direction to do my duty. I could not do otherwise. As the author of non-co-operation, a heavy responsibility lies on my shoulders. So give me in writing your impressions of Lucknow & Cawnpore. Let me drink the cup to the full. I am quite at peace with myself.
Yours sincerely
M.K.Gandhi
19-9-24

Gandhi's writing: Right hand


My dear Jawahar
We are living in strange times. Sitla Sahai may defend himself. ~~Have you seen him?~~ Please keep me informed of further developments. What is he? Is he a lawyer? Has he ever any connection with revolutionary activity?
As for the Congress, it would be better to make it as simple as possible so as to enable the present remaining workers to cope with it. And I know that your burden will be now increased.
But you
self in
com
I do not
attempt
I wish
and he
I want your mental peace. I know that you will serve the country even as manager of a business. I am sure that father will not mind any decision you may arrive at so long as it gives you complete peace.
Yours
Bapu
30-9-29
I see that I must reserve the right hand for M.J.

Left Hand

Courtesy: Jawaharlal Nehru

Journalist

GANDHI BECAME a regular reader of newspapers after reaching England at the age of 19. As a school student, he did not read them in India. He was very shy and could not speak in a gathering. At 21, he first wrote a series of articles on vegetarianism, Indian food habits, customs and religious festivals for The Vegetarian, an English weekly. His earliest writings show his capacity for expressing any idea in simple direct language.

After a gap of two years, Gandhi again took to journalism. From that time onwards his pen knew no rest till the end of his life. He never wrote anything only for creating an impression and carefully avoided exaggeration. His aim was to serve truth, to educate people and to be useful to his country.

On the third day of his arrival in South Africa Gandhi was insulted in a law court. He immediately published an account of this incident in a local newspaper and gained publicity overnight.

At the age of 35, he took charge of the Indian Opinion and through it he guided and unified the Indians in South Africa. A Gujarati edition of this weekly was simultaneously printed at Phoenix. A series of articles on dietetics appeared in the Gujarati Indian Opinion, also on the life of great men and women. Every issue of both these weeklies contained articles by Gandhi. There was an editor, but Gandhi bore the whole burden. He wanted to educate the public opinion, to remove causes of misunderstanding between the whites and the Indians and to point out the drawbacks of his countrymen. He poured out his soul in the columns of the Indian Opinion and published detailed account of the satyagraha struggle carried on in South Africa. From his writings overseas readers could form a true picture of the happenings in South Africa. Among the distinguished readers were Gokhale in India, Dadabhai Naoroji in England and Tolstoy in Russia. For ten years Gandhi worked hard for this weekly. He got two hundred journals per week in exchange of the Indian Opinion, read each one of them carefully and reproduced such news as might benefit the readers of the Indian Opinion.

Gandhi knew that newspapers could become a powerful medium for spreading ideas. He was a successful journalist but never intended to make a living from journalism. He believed that the aim of journalism was service: "Journalism should never be prostituted for selfish ends or for the sake of earning a livelihood. And whatever happens to the editors or the journal, it should express views of the country irrespective of the consequences. They will have to strike a different line of policy if they wanted to penetrate into the hearts of the masses."

And yet he never departed from the strictest facts. He avoided ornamentation, made no careless statement nor used unnecessary adjectives. He was very careful about faultless translation and choice of words. He disliked anonymous letters but, as a rule, published all letters to the editor containing adverse criticism.

When he took charge of the Indian Opinion, it was a losing concern and had a circulation of four hundred only. He did not want to make any profit out of it but also did not like to be a party to editing a newspaper that did not pay its way either. For some months he had to contribute Rs.1,200 per month to keep the Indian Opinion going. Altogether he incurred a personal loss of Rs.26,000. In spite of this heavy loss, he later decided to leave out all advertisements in order to devote more space for spreading his ideas. He knew that he would not be able to serve truth and remain independent if he, accepted advertisements. He observed: "To depend mainly on advertisements rather than on subscriptions for revenue is deplorable. The very newspaper which writes against the drink-evil publishes advertisements in praise of drink. Ninety-nine per cent advertisements are totally useless and harmful to the country. Many are deceitful and obscene." Gandhi never cared to increase the sale of his journals through

improper means or to compete with other newspapers. He never offered any prize money for crossword puzzle etc. because he did not want to offer other temptations to net in subscribers: “I have no desire to inflate the circulation of Young India or Navajivan by forbidding the other newspapers, to copy the chapters of my autobiography.”

In India too, for 30 years, he published his journals without soiling the pages of his weeklies with advertisements. He suggested that for each province, there should be only one advertising medium that would print decent descriptions of the things useful to people. After accepting the editorship of Young India, he was keen on conducting a Gujarati paper because a vernacular paper was a felt want. He brought out Navajivan, the Hindi and Gujarati version of Young India, and contributed many articles regularly. When Young India had a little more than 1,200 subscribers, Navajivan had 12,000. He cut down the annual subscription of Navajivan from Rs.8 to Rs.4. He did not offer any apology to his readers when he reduced the number of pages of his weeklies or when he donated Rs.50,000 to khadi work out of the profit made from Navajivan.

He was proud to say: “My ambition is to reach the masses. This one can do only through the vernaculars. My language is plainly rustic. Navajivan is read by hack-drivers and workers. I want it to reach the farmers and weavers in their huts. I want it to be in their language. They make India.” Editing a newspaper in English was no joy to him because English was a medium for reaching a microscopic minority.

Gandhi wanted his readers to regard themselves as proprietors of his journals. He wished all Indians to look upon his journal as belonging to them and not as something belonging to him. He added that if Himalayan blunders of language appeared in Navajivan, the readers should stop buying it and form a Navajivan Boycott Association. He knew an editor was liable to be held responsible for his assistant’s mistakes, errors committed by reporters and other contributors, slips made by a compositor or a proof-reader or for failure of machine leading to a failure in catching the post in time. Under his editorship, not once was the publication of his weeklies held up or delayed owing to late arrivals of written matter from him even when he was on a visit to Burma, Ceylon and England. Editing a journal was no light task for a busy person like Gandhi. Even at 70, at times he had to get up at 1.30 a.m. for finishing Harijan work. Under heavy pressure of work he had to write a lot. He often wrote on a running train. Some of his famous statements or editorials bore the mark “on the train”. When his right hand got tired, he wrote with the left. His left-hand writing was more legible. Even while convalescing he wrote three to four articles every week.

In India he did not run any paper on loss. Both his English and Indian language papers reached a circulation of 40,000. When he was jailed, the circulation dropped down to 3,000. After his release from the first imprisonment in India, a new feature of the weeklies was publication of his autobiography in a serial form. It continued for three years and created worldwide interest. He allowed almost all the Indian papers to reproduce his life-story. While in jail, he started another weekly, Harijan. Like Young India this too was priced one anna. It was mainly devoted to serve the untouchables. For years it did not contain any article on politics. It was first brought out in Hindi. Gandhi was permitted to write thrice a week from jail. Regarding the proposal for an English edition, he wrote to a friend: “I would warn you against issuing the English edition unless it is properly got up, contains readable material and translations are accurate. It would be much better to be satisfied with the Hindi edition only than to have an indifferently edited English weekly. I shall not handle the paper except to make it self-supporting.” He proposed to bring out 10,000 copies in the beginning and give it a trial of three months. In two months’ time, it became self-supporting. Later, it became a popular newspaper. People read it not for amusement but for instructions. It was published in English, Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Oriya, Marathi, Gujarati, Kannada and Bengalee. He wrote articles in Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati and English.

Gandhi's journals never had any sensational topics. He untiringly wrote on constructive work, satyagraha, nonviolence, diet, nature-cure, Hindu-Muslim unity, untouchability, spinning, khadi, swadeshi, village industries and prohibition. He advocated reorientation of education and food habits and was a severe critic of national defects.

He was a hard task-master. His secretary, Mahadev Desai, had to seek shelter in the lavatory from the crowded railway compartment and complete his work in time. Gandhi's assistants had to know all corresponding railway timings and postal clearance hours for a timely dispatch of written matter for publication. Once the train carrying Gandhi and his articles written on it was running late and there was no time for sending them by post. The English article was sent by a messenger and were printed in Bombay instead of his own press at Ahmedabad. The issue was brought out in time.

Gandhi was first jailed in India for his strong articles printed in Young India. He never submitted to any gagging order issued by the Government. When he was not allowed to express his deepest thoughts, he stopped writing. He was confident that he could any day persuade his readers to copy his editorials for him and circulate the news. He knew his paper could be suppressed but not its message, so long as he lived. By not caring for the aid of printing room and compositor's stick, the hand-written paper, he assured, could be a heroic remedy for heroic times. He published an unregistered weekly Satyagraha in 1919, defying the Government orders. This one-sheet weekly was sold for one pice.

Himself being a journalist of many years' standing, he spoke with authority on the traditions of good journalism: "The newspaperman has become a walking plague. Newspapers are fast becoming the people's Bible, Koran and Gita rolled in one. A newspaper predicts that riots are coming and all the sticks and knives in Delhi have been sold out. A journalist's duty is to teach people to be brave, not to instill fear into them."

Printer-Publisher

GANDHI EDITED Indian Opinion, Young India, Navajivan and Harijan. He printed and published them in his own press. He knew he would not be able to express his views freely, if his journals were printed in a press owned by others. When he took charge of the weekly Indian Opinion, it was a losing concern. He wanted to shift the printing press from the city to the out-of-the-way Phoenix Settlement. His friends thought it would prove a failure. He got his printing machinery, equipment and furniture neatly fitted in a shed. An old oil-engine was used to run the press. He had his office in a separate room. No paid servant or peon was employed there. Indian Opinion was despatched on Saturday. By Friday noon the articles were composed. The inmates of the settlement, old and young, assisted in composing, printing, cutting and folding the sheets, pasting addresses and making bundles. They had to reach them to the railway station in time. Usually they worked up to midnight. When the pressure of work was heavy, Gandhi with others kept awake the whole of the Friday night. Kasturba and other women sometimes helped them. From England he once wrote: "I hope that all the women-folk go to the Phoenix Press, especially on Saturdays." Indian Opinion reached the market on Sunday. On the very first night, when Indian Opinion was being printed in the Phoenix Settlement, the oil-engine failed. With the help of a hand-driven wheel, Gandhi and all able-bodied inmates ran the machine and issued the paper in due time. This arrangement helped Gandhi to learn the details of press work. He wrote articles, set types, lent a hand in printing and saw the proofs. Many youngsters became apprentice workers. The publication and printing of one issue of Indian Opinion was once entirely done by the young boys. In the beginning Indian Opinion was printed in four languages - English, Hindi, Gujarati and Tamil. For want of editors and compositors it was later printed in English and Gujarati only. When

Gandhi came to India and visited Adyar, Annie Besant noticed how with an expert's eye he observed the printing process there.

Apart from printing the weeklies, many books in Hindi, English and other languages were printed in Phoenix Press and Navajivan Press. Gandhi never deposited any security money with the Government. Profits from his own writings were mainly spent on khadi work. He made a trust deed of the Navajivan Press worth one lakh of rupees.

Bad printing he counted as an act of himsa. He insisted on clear types, durable paper and neat simple jackets. He knew costly books in attractive jackets were out of the reach of general readers of a poor country like India. During his lifetime, the Navajivan Press printed many books at a low price. His autobiography in Gujarati was priced only 12 annas. There was also a cheap edition of this book printed in Devanagari.

Gandhi stressed the need and advantage of using one script throughout India as that would save much time and labour of the readers and the pressmen. He preferred Devanagari because almost all the Indian languages were derived from Sanskrit. In the Gujarati version of the Indian Opinion is found a full-page description of the Tulsi Ramayana in Hindi script. Gandhi himself chose the types for Harijan. To a co-worker entrusted to close a bargain for buying a press, Gandhi's advice was: "Have a careful look at the machinery etc. Make sure that all the machines, one double royal machine and two treadles, work. See that the types are not worn out."

He was not for copyright and writings in the journals edited by him were common property. Only when there arose a chance of his writings being twisted, he agreed to exercise copyright rules.

He thought that children's books should be printed in bold types on good paper and each item should be illustrated with a nice sketch. He preferred thin booklets. They do not tire out the children and are easy to handle. Once an ashramite in charge of national education brought out a primer. It had pictures on every page and was printed on coloured art paper. With pride he asked: "Bapuji, have you seen the primer? The whole conception is mine." Gandhi told him: "Yes. It is beautiful, but for whom have you printed it? How many readers can afford to buy a five-anna-worth book? You are in charge of the education of the children of the starving millions of India. If other books sell at one anna, yours should be priced two pice. Gandhi once took charge of a weekly priced at two annas and brought it out for one anna per copy.

In publication, saving money was not the last word with Gandhi. Once the Navajivan Press decided to publish a Gujarati translation of Gokhale's writings and speeches. The translation was done by an educationist. When the book was printed, Gandhi was requested to write the foreword. He found the translation poor and stiff and asked it to be destroyed. When he was told that seven hundred rupees had been spent on it, he said: "Do you think it desirable to place this rubbish before the public after spending more on binding and cover? I do not want to ruin people's taste by distributing bad literature." The whole lot was burnt and was not allowed to be sold as waste paper.

Gandhi always defended liberty of the press. He stopped printing his journals when any Government order restricted him from publishing his views freely on the vital matters. For his love for freedom of the pen, his press was attached, his files were destroyed, he and his co-workers were jailed. He was never discouraged and remarked: "Let us break the idol of machinery and leaden type. The pen is our foundry and the hands of the copyists our printing machine. Let every one become his walking paper and carry the news from mouth to mouth. This no Government can suppress."

Fashion-setter



IN SOUTH AFRICA, Gandhi began to wear sandals with trousers. At that time it was unusual. He preferred sandals to smart shoes because during summer they kept the feet cool and during winter they could as well be worn with socks. He himself made the sandals. General Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa, heard that these hand-made sandals were strong yet comfortable and wanted to use a pair. Gandhi got a pair made with special care and presented it to him.

Gandhi had a way of doing things in a manner quite different from the accepted traditional form. Some of the fashions set by him were followed by others, some lapsed due to non-acceptance.

When he first attended a Congress session, he was astonished to see that separate kitchens were set up not merely for different castes, but for catering to the different tastes of the delegates and volunteers. He attached importance to the small things of life and felt that there could be no swaraj till people gave up this separatist mentality and developed a sense of oneness. He wanted to stop this wastage of money, time and labour by simplifying food habits. He made experiments on diet. In his ashrams, simple spiceless vegetarian food was cooked in a common kitchen. Muslims, Hindus, Parsis and Christians shared the same vegetarian food, seated in a common dining hall.

Gandhi stressed the food value of raw salads, fruits, nuts, boiled vegetables, hand-pounded rice and hand ground wheat flour. He explained that fresh gur or honey contained more vitamins than refined white sugar and thus tried to train people to appreciate the substance more than the look of a thing.

In the Faizpur Congress, delegates and visitors were for the first time served unpolished rice and whole meal bread. To hold the annual gathering of the Congress in a village was Gandhi's idea. Previously, for 50 years, highly educated group of leaders and intelligentsia formed the bulk of the

audience. Congress sessions were held in big cities like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Gandhi changed it into a people's Congress and gave it a mass character. Clad in simple Indian style of dress, he addressed the audience in Hindi.

He planned out the details of the Tilak Nagar at Faizpur. It was built by village artisans out of materials easily available in a village. Artist Nandalal Bose gave concrete shape to Gandhi's dream. The walls and the roof of the huts were made of bamboo. Coloured bamboos made the archway, which was decorated with upturned wicker baskets. The national flag flying aloft the gate too was Gandhi's own creation. A few years earlier he had given the flag the final shape. It was to be three coloured-saffron, white and green-arranged horizontally. The white was to contain, in the centre, a dark blue imprint of the spinning wheel that symbolised non-violence and the common man in India.

To Gandhi goes the credit of evolving our simple yet dignified national dress. When he led the epic march in South Africa, hundreds of miners and indentured labourers, mostly South Indians, joined the struggle. All were tortured, many were jailed, some died. In sympathy with them and for identifying himself with them, Gandhi suddenly decided to don a kurta and a dhoti worn in lungi fashion. He replaced the walking-stick with a lathi and carried a satchel.

Gandhi developed satyagraha-non-violent non-cooperation and mass civil disobedience as a powerful weapon to meet the organised violence of a mighty authority. He cited the ancient examples of Prahlad and Bibhishan as staunch non-cooperators with evil and brute force. He claimed no originality in doing so. But his bold effort to apply that technique of resistance to evil on a mass scale and to impress it in the political field was original. Its success, too, was striking. A foreign journalist once asked him: "Has not the atom bomb exploded your faith in truth and non-violence?" Gandhi replied: "No. I swear by non-violence and truth together standing for the highest order of courage before which the atom bomb is of no effect. Non-violence is the only thing that the atom bomb cannot destroy." He had contributed more than anyone else to mobilise the strength of the great mass of humanity in India.

Under Gandhi's leadership, India gained independence through non-violence. He wanted India to remain the hope of all the exploited races of the earth, whether in Asia, America or Africa: "Inasmuch as India's struggle is non-violent, it is a struggle for the emancipation of all the oppressed races against superior might." Following India's independence, many colonies gained freedom without bloodshed. The movement for securing human rights is spreading successfully among the American Negroes.

Along with his experiment in bringing a change of heart in an adversary, his dress underwent a significant change. After his final return to India from South Africa, Gandhi took to wearing a dhoti, kurta, long coat and huge Kathiawadi turban. He soon found that dress unsuitable for the warm climate. Moreover, yards of cloth were wasted He then changed over to wearing a dhoti, kurta and cap. So-called genteel folk were shocked to see him attend important meetings and public gathering in that dress. When Gandhi learnt to spin and weave, his entire dress was made of khadi. The Gandhi cap was something very akin to a Kashmiri cap without its embroidery. Gandhi insisted on its being white. When people complained that the white cap got easily soiled, he argued: "I chose the white cap for maintaining high standard of cleanliness. This thin cap is easily washable and does not take long time to dry up. Caps with a dark colour get equally dirty but conceal the dirt." Khadi dhoti or pyjama, kurta and Gandhi cap became popular and were accepted as the national dress.

Many Biharis, Marwaris and Gujaratis discarded their elaborate turbans for Gandhi cap and many Muslims their fez. Bengalees and South Indians, normally not used to a head-gear, began to wear it. During the swadeshi days the Gandhi cap worked as a red rag to Johri Bull. Volunteers wearing this white khadi cap were cruelly handled by the police and their caps were forcibly removed. Schoolboys

were punished for sporting it. At times a volunteer wearing a khadi Gandhi cap was fined Rs.10 and refusal to pay it lodged him in jail for 10 days. Gandhi himself wore it for a short time. His final change in dress ended in wearing a khadi loin-cloth, wrap and chappal. He believed a leader should be a true representative of his people. He moved in Europe and England and met the Emperor of India in that dress. Once a distinguished visitor from England was brought to his ashram from the railway station in a bullock-cart. All such visitors squatted on the floor of Gandhi's mud hut and held many serious discussions with Gandhi, the man of the masses. They ate the ashram food. This sage of Sevagram was a good host, very considerate to the needs of his guests but was never ashamed of extending a rustic's hospitality to sophisticated westerners. He did not think that the dignity of a nation or state, especially of a poor country, could be maintained by an exhibition of pomp. On the contrary, this display of false prestige, sham show and concealment of poverty hurt him. From his village abode Gandhi often had to run to Delhi and Simla, Bombay and Calcutta to hold important discussions with the Viceroy, Governors, British diplomats and foreign dignitaries. To spread his ideas and to keep in touch with his countrymen, he more than once travelled all over India, but never boarded a plane. He travelled third class. Before independence, other leaders followed his example. Gandhi wanted to change the whole system of administration: "In democracy, a kisan should be the ruler. A kisan Prime Minister would not ask for a palace to live in. He would live in a mud hut, sleep under the sky and work on land whenever he is free."

Gandhi knew how persons bred and brought up in sophisticated surroundings lacked the courage to adapt these bold ideas. He wanted to start right from the beginning by educating children in a different way. He gave enough thought to the experimental methods of education tried by some noted educationists and suggested a basic method of training the minds of the youngsters. He called it Nayee Talim. It gave less importance to literary training. Eradication of ignorance, not only of illiteracy, was his aim. By teaching through crafts, he hoped to develop the personality of young pupils and to create self-confidence in them. He wanted to initiate in them tolerance for all religions, love for all races and respect for all work.

In mass prayer meetings, he tried to introduce a prayer, culled from different religions of the world.

Gandhi untiringly spoke of his ideas in hundreds of public meetings and wrote numerous articles in his journals. In the many weeklies he edited successfully, he left out all advertisements, which fetched good revenue. He spurned money but loathed wastage in any form. Once he advised the organisers of meetings to avoid unnecessary expenses on decoration: "Flowers may be avoided altogether and yarn garland may be presented. Yarn must not be damaged by being tied in knots. Flags and buntings made out of waste khaddar, can be used. Money can be saved by avoiding the printing of addresses. The best calligraphists can write out the address on simple handmade paper and the paper can be nicely sewn on a piece of khaddar or boys and girls can embroider the letters on a piece of khaddar."

His ideas about interior decoration were unique. He did not like a room stuffed with carpets or crowded with furniture and curio collection. Window curtains had no fascination for him. Once he was the guest of a rich South Indian merchant. He disliked the hotchpotch collection of decorative pieces and said: "I have felt oppressed with the excessive furniture. There is in the midst of it hardly any room to breathe in. Some of your pictures are hideous. If you give me a contract for furnishing all the palaces in Chetti Nad, I should give you the same things for one-tenth of the money and give you more comfort and fresh air and secure a certificate from the best artists in India that I had furnished your houses in the most artistic manner." This tall claim of Gandhi was justified by Nandalal Bose's appreciation of Gandhi's hut at Sevagram: "The floor and walls were

plastered with cow-dung. There was no picture, no photograph, figure or statue in the room. A mat was spread in one corner with a folded khaddar sheet and a cushion for sitting. On one side of the packing-case covered with khaddar, to serve as a writing desk, was a small polished lota of bell-metal covered with an iron sheet shaped like a pipal leaf. The room had an atmosphere of cleanliness, tidiness and quiet beauty. He was sitting in the room sparsely clad in a piece of khaddar cloth worn tightly round the waist. A pleasant smile was always playing on his lips. He appeared to me like a sword of fine temper, kept unsheathed, having all the attributes of the sword save that of himsa."

Snake-charmer



AS A BOY Gandhi was afraid of snakes. He could not go out alone in darkness. He imagined thieves, ghosts and snakes were waiting to jump at him.

He led the life of a semi-mendicant at 35 and lived in ashrams. His ashram did not just mean a hut to live in, but a big compound with a well, enough land for cultivation and an orchard attached to it. It was a quiet place, far away from the dust and din of a city. Gandhi was not rich, so he acquired cheap wastelands. All the ashrams, the Phoenix Settlement, Tolstoy Farm, Sabarmati Ashram, Wardha Ashram and Sevagram, were infested with snakes. Before the huts were built, the inmates had to live under canvas and it was risky to live like that with children. One day a poisonous snake would be found clinging to the roof of the farmyard, the other day a couple of serpents lying in a circle near a bicycle. Sometimes they entered bedrooms. What to do with them was a problem. Gandhi believed in ahimsa, he was a devoted Vaishnava. Even for saving the life of his son, his wife or his own self, he did not use any medicine or diet made from fish, flesh or fowl. Cows and she-buffaloes were tortured for extracting the last drop of milk from them and that made him give up cow and buffalo's milk. How could then a snake be killed? The general rule was not to kill snakes even if they were poisonous. A device was made from ropes to catch snakes and to let them loose at a safe distance from the ashram. But when they were in such a position that they could not be caught or when a person had not the courage to go near them and catch them, what was to be done then? Gandhi knew it was impossible to avoid violence completely. To eat vegetables was also doing violence to the plants. With regret he admitted: "I don't feel so sorry on a snake's slaughter as on the death of a child from snake-bite. I still am afraid of snakes, so how can I ask others to be fearless?" When all other methods of driving away snakes failed, he gave permission to kill them.

He had a keen desire to learn the details of snake-lore. With the help of Kallenbach he began to know a poisonous snake from a non-poisonous one. For practical study Kallenbach caught a cobra, kept it in a cage and fed it with his own hand. The ashram children were greatly interested in watching it. None harassed this new friend. Gandhi was not happy. He told Kallenbach: “We have imprisoned it to study its ways and habits. Our friendship may not be clear to the cobra. Neither you nor I have the courage to play with it. Your friendliness is not free from fear. There is not love in the act of taming the cobra.” Perhaps the cobra too felt that men were not very friendly to it and one day escaped from the cage.

Another German inmate of the ashram could handle snakes fearlessly. He caught young snakes and made them play on his palm. Gandhi wanted to cultivate such courage. He wished to reach that stage when a snake should know from his touch that he did not want to hurt it. To him it was a great achievement to be able to put his hand in the mouth of a snake with Ramanam on his lips. But to the last day of his life he could not take up a snake or a scorpion with his hand. Gandhi was ashamed of it.

He did not give up his interest in the study of snakes even when he kept busy with important work. Once some leaders went to him for consultation and were alarmed to find a snake hanging coiled round his neck. Gandhi was absorbed in a talk with a snake-charmer and eager to learn from him the art of handling snakes and the cure of bites. One person was to be bitten by a snake for the experiment. Gandhi was ready for the snake-bite but his colleagues refused to allow this daring experiment on such a valuable life. Gandhi lost the chance of becoming a snake-charmer’s chela at the age of 70.

Years before, when Gandhi was in prison, his gum kept bleeding. A Negro prisoner attended on him. None of them understood the language of the other. They talked with gestures. One day the Negro came howling to him with an ailing finger. On enquiry Gandhi learnt that he was bitten by something. Immediately he sent a note to the jail hospital. He knew that to let out the poisoned blood was a sure relief. As no clean knife was available, he began to suck venom out from the wound. It was dangerous to suck poison with a bleeding gum yet he could not see the Negro writhe in pain.

Gandhi knew that all snakes were not poisonous and all snake-bites were not fatal. Only 12 per cent snakes are venomous. He wanted to educate his countrymen, especially the villagers, in snake-lore. He published some articles on snakes with apt diagrams and sketches. He once wrote in Harijan: “We cannot tell a poisonous from a non-poisonous snake and therefore kill all without thought. In many cases it is the fright that kills the victim of a snake-bite. The poisonous ones too do not bite unless they are trodden upon or mishandled. Snakes clear the field of rats, vermin and pests. Hence they are called kshetrapals -guards of the harvest land. On Nagapanchami day, mothers in villages keep a saucer of milk for snakes. It is a gesture of friendship with snakes. The picture of Vishnu lying on the serpent shesha with seven hoods appeals to me. I think it shows how God can fearlessly lie on the lap of a snake that spreads its hood on His head. Snake is not a source of danger in God’s eyes.” A batch of half-naked urchins were once seen crowding near Gandhi’s hut. Their eyes were fixed on a snake kept in a glass jar. It was caught and sent to a surgeon. He found it was a krait, one of the most poisonous varieties, smashed its head and sent it back to Gandhi. Its spinal cord was intact and it did not die for three days. To relieve its pain it was killed and kept in a jar with rectified spirit. Gandhi wanted to exhibit alive or dead snakes to the villagers. He got a cage made for live specimens.

Gandhi once asked a philosopher friend: “What should a seeker do, when a snake attacks him?” He replied: “He should not kill the snake and if it bites, he should let it do so.” Gandhi himself never hurt snakes and they too never did any harm to him or to the ashram inmates. Nobody died of snake-bite in any of his ashrams. Gandhi often felt their cool touch but the Snakes never save him a taste of their fangs.

One cold evening Gandhi was conversing with a friend. Suddenly a snake appeared on the edge of Gandhi's chaddar and wriggled its hood. The friend asked Gandhi to keep calm. Gandhi was least agitated and advised his friend not to be panicky. The friend caught hold of the wrap and threw it away with a jerk. On another occasion a snake crawled on Gandhi's chest when, he was taking rest after meals. He was least disturbed. Once more, an educated modern snake-charmer came to visit Gandhi when he was lying in a hospital. He wanted to display his power to tame the snakes and let loose some poisonous snakes on Gandhi's bed. They began to dance gracefully on his blanket. Gandhi watched them with interest but kept his legs perfectly still.

Another evening, during prayers when Gandhi was observing silence, a snake lost its way and moved towards him. His companions got visibly moved. The commotion made the snake nervous and it sought safe refuge in Gandhi's lap. He made a sign to all to keep calm and continued his prayer. The snake quietly slipped away. When Gandhi was asked about his reaction he replied: "For a moment I felt uneasy. Then I regained my calm. If that snake bit me, I would have said, 'Don't kill it, don't do any violence to it. It should have nothing to fear and must be allowed to go free."

Priest

WHEN GANDHI took to the life of a brahmachari and voluntary poverty, he affirmed that those who wanted to do humanitarian service should remain unmarried.

Before this idea gripped him, he was keen on getting his bachelor friends married. He wanted them all to live together as members of one big family. He advised his Indian co-workers to come to South Africa with their wives and encouraged his English friends, Mr. West and Mr. Polak, to get married soon. Polak was hesitant because of his financial difficulties. Gandhi said it was not right to postpone a long-arranged match when there was a heart union. On the next day of the bride's arrival in South Africa from England, Polak married her. Gandhi made all arrangements for the marriage and himself acted as the best man.

In his ashrams in India, Gandhi sometimes acted as the priest. His method of matchmaking and of performing the priest's duty was unorthodox. He tried to reform Hindu marriage system and defied many customary usages. Dowry, wealth, diplomas and high caste, he never considered as qualifications that made a bride or a groom more eligible. Health and character and fitness for doing body labour were the essential qualifications. In a marriage blessed by him the bride and the groom wore hand-spun, hand-woven khadi used no other ornament than hand-spun yarn garlands which they exchanged before a sacrificial fire. They chanted Vedic mantras. No costly presents or dowry was given to the groom.

Gandhi decried the evil custom of deti-leti (dowry) and chastised the college students for reducing women to slaves. Instead of making their wives the queens of their homes and their heart, they converted them into mere chattels to be bought and sold. Were not women described as ardhanga - the better half of men? He said: "If I had a girl under my charge, I would rather keep her a maiden all her life than give her away to one who expected a single pice for taking her for his wife."

He disliked any show of pomp and elaborate arrangements for marriage feasts. He thought that in this age of democracy, more than ten rupees should not be spent for the religious ceremony. And nothing beyond the religious ceremonial should be considered a part of marriage rites. Even for the poorest in the land this tall order was very difficult to execute. To the peasants who incur heavy debts due to

marriages or shradh ceremony, he said: “I shall become your priest. Much money is not needed to perform a marriage or shradh ceremony.” He did not believe in the shradh ceremony as it is commonly understood by the people. To him, the only true way of celebrating the shradh of one’s ancestors was to translate their good qualities into daily life. He also did not accept the mystical meaning that a yajnopavita - the sacred thread - is supposed to possess: “I see no sense in investing people with it. The Aryans wore it to distinguish themselves from the non-Aryans. If it is fit only for the distinction of high and low, it is fit to be cast away. Observance of chastity is the best of threads.”

This priest did not demand any fee but he sometimes asked for donations to the Harijan fund. He once performed the marriage ceremony of an inter-caste couple and received five thousand rupees for building wells for the Harijans. Once a Harijan Christian acted as the priest in marrying a Hindu brahmin couple in the ashram.

After one marriage ceremony, Gandhi served the guests with fresh gur that cost him six annas. To a bridegroom he once wrote: “You come here alone, I shall marry you and send you in pair.” He did not think that the groom needed any friends or relatives to accompany him. When he saw a party of seven, he remarked: “Ah, the saptarshi - the seven sages - has come.” They added: “Yes, Arundhati (bride’s mother) too.”

At the marriage of his third son, Gandhi presented the couple with a copy of the Gita, Ashram Bhajanavali, a mangal mala and a takli. He told his son: “You will guard your wife’s honour and be not her master, but her true friend. Let your lives be consecrated to the service of the motherland. You will both earn your bread by the sweat of your brow.” The bride’s mother presented a charkha to the bridegroom. Before the ceremony, the couple fasted, cleaned the well basin and cow-shed and watered trees to symbolise unity with the whole creation. They also span and read the Gita. All these acts were parts of Gandhi’s idea of saptapadi - ritual of the pair’s moving seven steps forward. The bridegroom’s betrothal was kept pending for two years till the bride reached her eighteenth year. Gandhi discouraged child marriages: “As I see the youngsters of the age of 13 about me I think of my own marriage. I am inclined to pity myself ... I can see no religion to have as one’s wife a girl who is fit only to sit on one’s lap. I do not regard a girl married, who is given away in marriage by her parents without her consent. I cannot conceive a girl of 15 becoming a widow. Widows have as much right to remarry as have the widowers;” He supported divorce under certain conditions and once from jail sent his blessings to a Hindu woman who was going to marry a second time, though her first husband was alive.

In spite of claiming to be a sanatani Hindu, Gandhi advocated inter-caste, inter-religious and inter-provincial marriage. Every mixed marriage, he thought, would bring people together. He was happy when his youngest son, a Gujarati bania, married a South Indian brahmin girl.

Gandhi was greatly influenced by his devout Vaishnava parents. From the age of 12 he regarded untouchability as a sin, at 17 he learnt to treat all men alike without distinction of caste or creed and at 21 he studied the Gita, the Bible and books of other religions. He believed it was foolish for the followers of one religion to say, “Ours is the only true religion and all others are false.” He was well versed in the Gita and Upanishads and read parts of the Vedas. He never quoted the scriptures off hand and tried to practise their teachings in day-to-day life. His study of many religions taught him tolerance and gave him courage to bear sorrow bravely. He also learnt that the man who depended on physical force spread irreligion and he who depended on soul force understood true religion. Conversion was meaningless to him. He could explain the basic tenets of Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity with equal ease. He often attended services at churches. He once delivered a series of four lectures on Hinduism in which he pointed out the distinctive merit of each religion.

He could quote Christ's sayings so aptly that some Europeans thought that he was a born Christian. On the Christmas Eve, his co-passengers once requested him to speak on the teachings of Jesus on the deck of a steamer. During prayers, he recited ayats from the Koran in mass prayer meetings. Some Hindus and Muslims objected to it. He held very bold views about Hinduism and disowned inequality of castes. And this made the orthodox Hindus angry. They insulted him with black flag demonstration and a garland of shoes and tried to kill him. Still he said: "I refuse to be a Hindu, if untouchability is a part of it. Hinduism ought to perish, if this blot on humanity is not removed. Our religion is based on ahimsa which is nothing but love, love not only to our neighbours, not only to our friends, but love even to those who may be our enemies." He did not visit any temple that was not open to all, After years of pleading, he succeeded in getting many temples thrown open to the Harijans.

To him God was truth and religion was to be lived. God was present in a drop of water or in tiny specks of dust. Gandhi preferred the worship of the formless but did not denounce idol worship because "those who worship idols, worship not the stone but the God who resides in it". While arguing on idol worship, he once told Tagore: "The outcaste's little piece of red-painted stone used for an altar under the tree is important. It is the only link between himself and God. You dare not take the crutch away from a lame man's arm until you have taught the cripple how to walk." He also saw nothing harmful or evil in tree-worship: "I find in it a thing instinct with a deep pathos and poetic beauty. It symbolises true reverence for the entire vegetarian kingdom which declares the greatness and glory of God."

He strongly protested against the opening of "a temple to Gandhiji" and in the ashram made it criminal to touch his feet. This saintly soul initiated his countrymen into a new mantra - service to motherland and Daridranarayan, the mantra of liberty, equality and fraternity of all human beings, the mantra of liberation of the mind from all fears and slavery. He demonstrated the noble and brave art of sacrificing self in the various walks of life. He never got tired of repeating how "mankind has to get out of violence through non-violence and hatred call be overcome only by love."

Gandhi led a very active life. He agreed with the teaching of the Gita that he who eats food without offering a daily sacrifice, karmayajna or body labour, steals his meal. Bread labour he counted as one of the karmayajnas. He never spent a day without doing some sort of body labour. He never told lies, never molested any living creature and never uttered a slander. He woke up early before sunrise and every morning and evening offered his prayers. His daily prayer was a selection from the Gita and the Upanishad, Koran and Zend-Avesta. While on land or sea, on a moving train or a ship, whether under the roof of a Muslim, a Christian or an outcaste or while moving from village to village on foot, he stuck to this practice. Life in jail proved no exception. He could deny himself food for 21 days but could not pass a clap without saying his prayers. Prayer was not a lip service to him, but a living faith in God. The object of prayer was not to please God, but to purify one's own self. At the age of 36, he began to practise brahmacharya and introduced congregational prayer in the Phoenix Settlement. Every evening, bhajan and Christian hymns were sung there. In the late years of his life, in mass prayer meetings, he invited people to sing Ramdhun to the beating of time with hands. He loved to see the whole of India covered with prayer gatherings.

Gandhi could not put up with deception but he did not punish others for their lapses. If anyone told lies or did any wrong, he himself fasted for purification.

This priest more than once installed images in temples and performed opening ceremony of temples. He laid the foundation-stones of schools and hospitals. In Noakhali, Gandhi reinstalled an image defiled by the Muslims. He opened the Laxminarayan Temple in Delhi, the Bharatmata Temple at Varanasi, a temple for the Hariians at Selu and the Maruti Temple at Ratnagiri. At Ratnagiri he said: "I

install the image of Maruti not merely because he had the strength of the giant. Even Ravana had that strength. But Maruti had strength of the soul, spiritual strength which was the direct fruit of his brahmacharya and devotion to Rama."

Gandhi's faith in Ramanam was unshakable. While going to the prayer meeting, when he was shot by a fanatic Hindu, he breathed his last uttering "He Rama".

March of Events

- Gandhi born in Porbander on October 2, 1869
- Married to Kasturba in 1881
- Matriculated in November 1887
- Reached London for studies in October 1888
- Enrolled as a barrister in June 1891
- Returned to India in June 1891
- Sailed for South Africa in April 1893
- Visited India in 1896 and 1901
- First attended the Indian National Congress in 1901
- Took charge of the Indian Opinion in 1903
- Established the Phoenix Settlement in 1904
- Led the Indian Ambulance Corps during the Boer War in 1899 and during Zulu Rebellion in 1906
- Took to a life of brahmacharya in 1906
- Went to England in 1906 and 1909
- First jailed in South Africa in 1908
- Established the Tolstoy Farm in 1910
- Led an epic march of satyagrahis in South Africa in 1913
- Left South Africa in 1914 and reached India in January 1915
- Established Sabarmati Ashram in 1915, Wardha Ashram in 1933 and Sevagram Ashram in 1936
- Champaran satyagraha launched in 1917
- First no-tax campaign launched in Kheda in 1918
- Jallianwala Bagh massacre in Amritsar in 1919
- Became editor of Young India and Navajivan in 1919
- Launched non-cooperation movement in 1921
- First jailed in India in 1922
- His khadi tour in 1927
- Led Dandi March and salt satyagraha in 1930

- Attended the Round Table Conference in London and revisited Europe in 1931
- His Harijan tour in 1933
- Started Harijan weekly in 1933
- Sponsored Nayee Talim in 1937
- Launched "Quit India" movement in 1942
- Last imprisonment in the Aga Khan Palace from 1942-4
- Assassinated on January 30, 1948

end